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ABSTRACT

In January 2001, the chancellor of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) appointed a Distance Learning Task Force to develop a distance learning strategic plan. This final report details the Task Force's strategic plan in which they developed a distance learning vision, designed a prospective governance model, defined funding assumptions, and proposed a number of inter-related funding strategies. This report examines the strategic plan in six sections: (1) introduction; (2) current environment; (3) developing the distance learning governance model; (4) the distance learning governance model; (5) the distance learning funding model; and (6) implementation considerations (strategic, organizational, technology, delivery, policy, and process considerations). The plan endorses taking a student-centered approach to learning and providing support services that ensure student success and faculty development. Five key themes emerged from interviews and focus groups: rewards and incentives, structural balance, integrated services and infrastructure, quality assurance, and vision. It was also determined that strong and effective leadership is essential for realizing the distance learning vision. This report contains 11 appendices which include a glossary of terms, an interview guide, results from student and faculty surveys, four alternative governance models, four alternative funding models, learner services paths, and service center expenditure scenarios. (KP)

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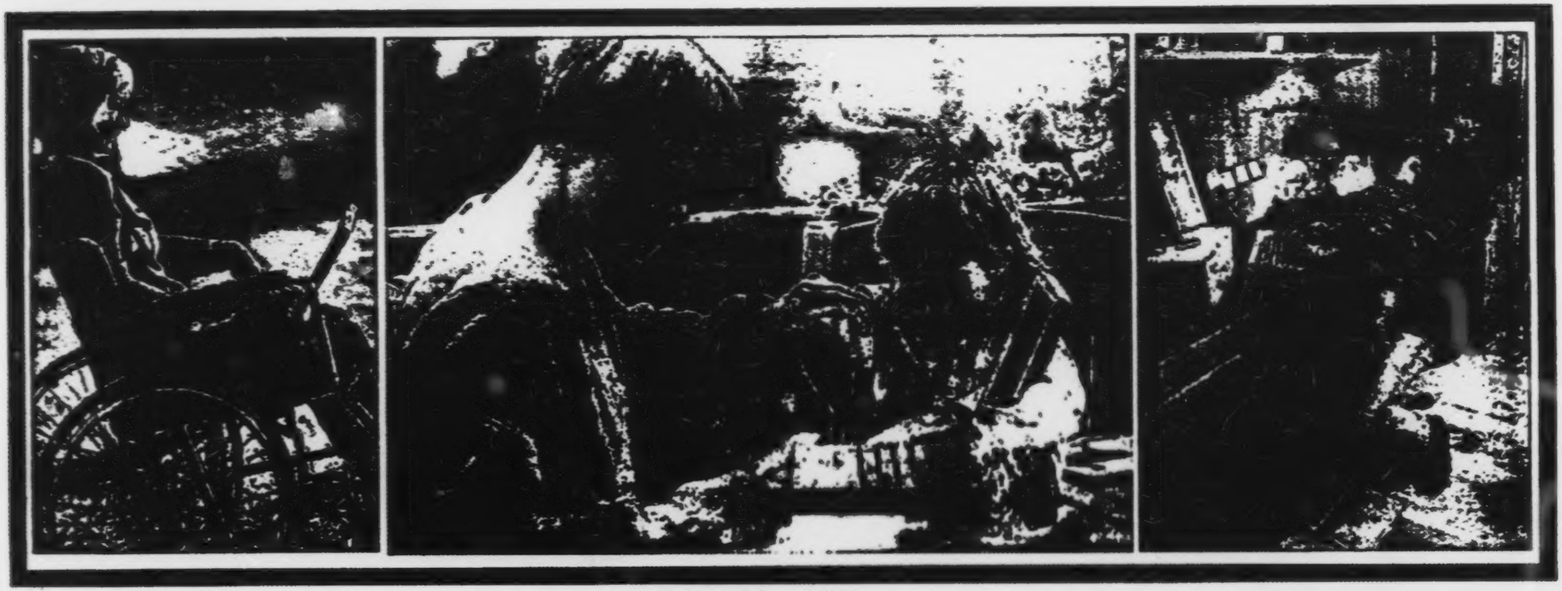
Virginia Community College System

Organizational Strategy for Distance Learning

Final Report



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PROLOGUE

Prologue

Throughout its three and a half centuries, American higher education has demonstrated an outstanding capability to reinvent itself in order to provide greater access and more effectively respond to the needs of learners. Prior to the American revolution, eight colleges were founded to prepare the elite for professions in the church and in law. Before the Constitution was even ten years old, the first state institution was established in recognition of the need to educate a larger citizenry. The first half of the 19th century is notable for the growth in small, church-related colleges, especially throughout the midwest. These colleges were founded to foster the tenets of the supporting denomination, but also to serve those young men--and for the first time women--who could not easily attend the established institutions of the east.

The Morrill Act of 1862 created the land grant college to provide instruction in agriculture and the mechanic arts and "to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes." Around the middle of the century, many states also established the first of the "normal" schools to prepare primary and secondary school teachers. Not many years later, the founding of Johns Hopkins University set the stage for the development of the American research universities and for new-found international leadership in higher education. This era also saw the founding of many of today's historically black colleges and universities--state normal schools, private colleges and institutes in the south and midwest, and the 1890 land grant institutions.

Developments during the 20th century included the continuing maturation of the normal schools into full-fledged baccalaureate state teachers colleges, the expanded role of research in universities, the development of state systems of higher education, and the rapid growth and development of junior and community colleges.

Prologue (con't)

Just as the organizational and service models of American higher education addressed issues of demand and access, so changes in curricula and modes of instruction provided greater attention to the needs of the learner. The "trivium and the quadrivium" gave way to electives and professional courses and majors. Lectures, memorization, and recitation were supplemented by student-faculty dialogue, student academic journals and clubs, seminars, independent research, and the professional practicum. Correspondence study and cooperative extension programs served the needs of the "distant" learner; many of the cooperative extension centers subsequently emerged into some of the first branch campuses to serve the post-WWII enrollment boom, not only to increase capacity, but also to provide educational opportunity closer to the learner.

The learning process has also been enhanced by greater access to library materials and to increasingly sophisticated laboratory equipment, by video, film, television, and most recently by the computer and the Internet. This is the environment and the history in which the current debates over the role of instructional technology and distance learning foment.

This report accepts the premise that the colleges within the Virginia Community College System will employ instructional technology and will expand their role in distance learning as part of the evolution of American higher education. The report does not explore the "why" in depth. Rather, it focuses on actions that must be taken and the structures needed to take these actions. It recognizes that to do so requires both a strategy and a willingness to set priorities. Above all else, the report assumes that the colleges will place quality and the needs of the learner at the forefront of their decisions--just as they have done historically so successfully.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

In January 2001, the chancellor of the Virginia Community College System appointed a Distance Learning Task Force to develop a distance learning strategic plan. Building upon a series of seven previous reports related to distance learning and guided by consultants from PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Task Force developed a distance learning vision, designed a prospective governance model, defined funding assumptions, and proposed a number of inter-related funding strategies.

Forces for Change

Powerful forces are driving substantial change in the landscape of higher education. Social and economic changes are driving increases in the need for regular reskilling in the work place, in the number of non-traditional students, and in demands for efficient and focused degree programs. At the same time, a variety of existing institutions and new commercial competitors are using "e-commerce-like" learning tools to project a competitive presence into other institution's traditional markets. These and related forces result in substantial and rapidly changing expectations of colleges by students, parents, employers, faculty, and the larger society.

To respond to changing expectations, public colleges such as those that comprise the Virginia Community College System will have to shape their delivery of education in ways that reflect the needs of the professions and the broader working environment. The development of a distance learning strategy is one means to shape that environment for VCCS, and in doing so reflects the historical nature of American higher education to develop new models of educational delivery, service, and organizational structure in response to changes in curricular demand, student access, instructional delivery, and the learning process.

This strategy for distance learning is one response to the changing needs of learners in the Virginia Community College System.

Executive Summary (con't)

Each of the sections of this executive summary answers a critical question addressed by the Distance Learning Task Force.

What is the purpose of the project?

The overriding goal of the VCCS distance learning strategy project is to create an organizatoinal structure to support System-wide distance learning operations. Supporing objectives include the need to define decision-making authority, clarify roles and responsibilities, and define funding strategies and policies.

Why should VCCS be developing a distance learning strategy? What are the strategic drivers of distance learning?

There are three inter-related drivers that compel VCCS to develop a distance learning strategy: the need to expand program opportunities at each of the 23 colleges, student demand for increased access to programs, and pressures for VCCS to respond to the marketplace.

What conclusions does one reach from an assessment of VCCS' current environment?

Research into the status of the distance learning environment across the System's twenty-three colleges revealed a deal of unevenness in the readiness and capacity to deliver distance learning programs and support service. Across the colleges there is also a strong desire for a vision and for increased direction and leadership for distance learning, including the establishment of strategic distance learning priorities. Research also reavealed that in setting priorities, maintaining the primary role of the colleges is critical, as is the need to foster effective and reliable student and faculty support services.

Executive Summary (con't)

What should the VCCS distance learning environment look like in the future?

The distance learning vision endorsed by the Task Force is tightly honed and ambitious:

The Virginia Community College System provides world class distance learning programs and services that respond to the needs of the Commonweath.

To achieve this vision, VCCS must:

- Provide strong, collective college leadership
- Provide broadly accessible, consistently high quality distance learning instruction and support for both students and faculty across all colleges
- Establish and support a set of program priorities that respond to unique demands and that cannot be addressed in any other way
- Assure that those programs targeted as priorities meet the quality benchmarks applied to programs acknowledged as outstanding beyond VCCS and Virginia

Executive Summary (con't)

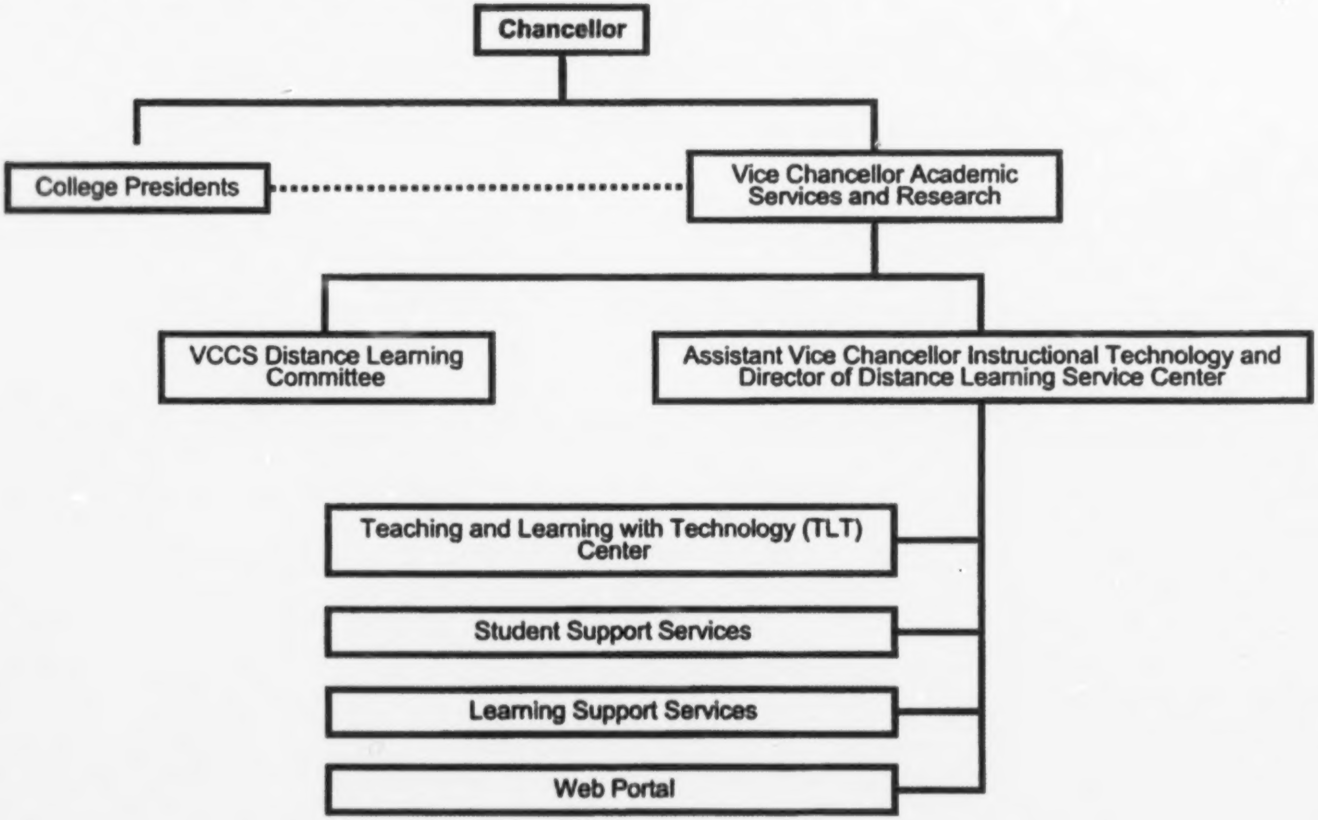
What factors need to be considered in formulating a new structure for distance learning?

The Task Force formulated a governance structure for distance learning on a foundation of seven building blocks: technical infrastructure, delivery modes, support services, leadership, policies, program planning, and finances. Working from this foundation, six strategic principles, in turn, provided the framework for this structure. These six principles are:

- Retain college authority over academic decisions
- Sustain measured strategic growth
- Identify a number of strategic program priorities
- Support a broad range of electronic delivery modes
- Establish e-learning programs as the highest priority for new distance learning program development
- Provide System-wide support for distance learning technical infrastructure, academic support, and student services

Executive Summary (con't)

What should the new organizational governance structure look like?



Chancellor

College Presidents

Vice Chancellor Academic Services and Research

VCCS Distance Learning Committee

Assistant Vice Chancellor Instructional Technology and Director of Distance Learning Service Center

Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) Center

Student Support Services

Learning Support Services

Web Portal

* Diagram does not reflect faculty roles and responsibilities

Executive Summary (con't)

Within the proposed governance structure, what will be the respective responsibilities of the colleges and the VCCS Distance Learning Service Center?

The proposed governance structure focuses on the student as learner and relies on effectives interactions among the learner, the colleges, and a new VCCS Distance Learning Service Center. Within this structure, the colleges and the Distance Learning Service Center assume very explicit responsibilities:

- **College Responsibilities**
  - Enroll students
  - Deliver courses
  - Maintain academic quality
  - Confer degrees
  - Coordinate click and mortar approach
  - Oversee faculty workload and professional development
  - Retain responsibility for delivery of non-electronic correspondence study
- **Service Center Responsibilities**
  - Launch and market distance learning initiatives
  - Provide support services
  - Develop and maintain the distance learning infrastructure
  - Facilitate and coordinate college content and services
  - Propose strategic alliances
  - Coordinate development of policies and standards
  - Provide the distance learning technology infrastructure

Executive Summary (con't)

What are the roles of VCCS leadership and the VCCS Distance Learning Service Center in supporting distance learning?

The roles identified in the proposed VCCS distance learning organization reflect the significant contributions of college and System leadership, faculty, and staff support in the development and delivery of distance learning programs and courses.

- The Chancellor is responsible for articulating the overall role of distance learning among the System's priorities.
- The Vice Chancellor for Academic Services and Research works with the Presidents and the Vice Chancellor of Information Technology Services to facilitate distance learning policy and direction among the 23 colleges and to leverage appropriate IT support.
- A VCCS Distance Learning Committee, reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Services and Research, is responsible for developing and advising on overall policy and direction for distance learning; the committee membership includes deans, faculty, and functional support personnel from the colleges.
- The Assistant Vice Chancellor for Instructional Technology and Director of the Distance Learning Service Center provides day-to-day leadership and coordination of distance learning both centrally and across the System.
- Four support divisions report to the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Instructional Technology and Director of the Distance Learning Service Center:

– **Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) Center:** serves as the support arm for faculty involved in distance learning courses and programs. The Center provides instructional design support services, and services as a focal point for faculty members to exchange insights about and experiences with instructional technology, including the Internet, telecommunications, and networks.

– **Student Support Services Division:** provides distance learning students with student-centered logistical support services, e.g., online enrollment services.

– **Learning Support Services Division:** ensures that distance learning students are provided with learning support services to promote student success, e.g., tutoring, advising, exam proctoring, placement testing, online training, and assessment.

– **Web Portal Division:** develops and maintains the design and content of the VCCS distance learning portal on behalf of the colleges.

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Executive Summary (con't)

How should VCCS fund its distance learning strategy?

Effective funding strategies for distance learning and related technology infrastructure require aligning revenue solutions with strategic initiatives; this means recognizing technology funding as an operating expense rather than as a capital expenditure, establishing funding strategies that provide renewable or life-cycle funding, and recognizing that personnel represents a large, and growing, proportion of the funding required.

For VCCS, this requires embracing a multi-pronged strategy that:

- Acknowledges that the colleges have already contributed significant "off-the'top" resources to support System-wide distance learning initiatives
- Focuses current System-level resources for distance learning on the development of the new Distance Learning Service Center, but acknowledges that the provision of support for distance learning will be through a combination of college-based and Service Center staffing and services
- Commits to the principle of "measured strategic growth"
- Develops a successful distance learning track record that establishes the business case for new, permanent General Assembly funds
- Utilizes student fees to provide a sustainable source of distance learning resources
- Allocates tuition revenues for distance learning directly to the colleges to assure maximum commitment by the colleges to the VCCS distance learning vision and assure proper implementation of distance learning initiatives

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) is committed to forging a strategic role in distance learning for its 23 colleges. Over the past several years, VCCS has developed a series of reports on distance learning. Through the System and the individual colleges it has invested considerable time and financial resources in support of distance learning

DISTANCE LEARNING IS A SIGNIFICANT INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY MODE AT VCCS...

VCCS colleges use a variety of distance learning technologies including the World Wide Web, email, videotapes, interactive ("compressed") video, broadcast video, telecourses, audio conferencing, print-based materials, and combinations of technology and regular classroom instruction. Enrollments for courses using these distance learning technologies currently exceed 28,000 students. According to many VCCS students, distance learning courses offer the flexibility and access they need to accomplish their academic goals while balancing personal commitments.

Through VCCS Online, students can search for courses that meet their interests and goals, find out how to contact the Admissions & Records Office, and learn about enrollment procedures at the college offering the course in which they are interested.

SUSTAINING AND EXPANDING ON ITS DISTANCE LEARNING SUCCESS REQUIRES STRATEGIC THINKING AND INVESMENT...

While VCCS has many achievements in distance learning, it recognizes that much work remains to determine how to employ instructional technology most effectively to address a range of student access issues and to respond more broadly to the educational marketplace. In February 2000, the Distance Learning and Instructional Technology Advisory Committee submitted the Distance Learning Action Plan for 2000-2003 to the Chancellor. The action plan asserts that VCCS must evolve to serve a new student who expects to be able to access educational resources in the Commonwealth through one web portal.

The first step in this multi-faceted action plan requires creation of an organization structure that addresses System-wide distance learning operations, including related policies and services. In February 2001, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) was retained to facilitate a Task Force in the development of a Strategic Plan for Distance Learning in the VCCS. This report is the outcome of this effort and provides VCCS with a strategic blueprint for developing a governance model and financing structure to promote distance learning activities.

Project Scope and Objectives

Building upon the project need set forth in the Request for Proposals issued by the VCCS, PwC and the System office worked together to identify, clarify and refine the scope, goals and objectives of the project.

SCOPE: To produce a compelling high-level strategic plan for distance learning that provides guidelines for addressing the project goals and objectives.

OVERRIDING GOAL: To create an organizational structure to support System-wide distance learning operations.

INTER-RELATED OBJECTIVES:

- Define decision-making authority
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Define funding strategies and policies
- Identify methodologies for assessing and selecting distance learning initiatives
- Identify college, department, and faculty incentives for participating in distance learning initiatives.

Project Structure and Methodology

The project was conducted in six phases that involved analyzing current activities and key distance learning drivers; understanding the current distance learning environment within the VCCS and related key issues; developing a vision for distance learning; evaluating alternative governance models; and identifying the most strategic distance learning governance model and funding structure for VCCS. Appendices A through D respectively list Task Force membership, PricewaterhouseCoopers' consultants to the Task Force, Task Force meeting schedule, and a glossary of terms used throughout the report.

Phase I: Finalize Project Planning	▪ Finalize project plan ▪ Conduct project kickoff with Task Force
Phase II: Assess Current Environment	▪ Collect and analyze VCCS and college distance learning plans, policies and organization charts ▪ Conduct interviews and focus groups ▪ Analyze student and faculty surveys
Phase III: Develop Vision and Alternative Models	▪ Develop statement of vision and evaluation criteria ▪ Convene Task Force to discuss current environment, vision and evaluation criteri ▪ Develop governance alternatives ▪ Present pertinent best practices ▪ Develop funding options
Phase IV: Select Preferred Models	▪ Convene Task Force meeting to present, discuss and evaluate alternatives ▪ Select governance approach
Phase V: Develop Interim Report	▪ Develop and distribute interim report to Task Force ▪ Convene Task Force meeting to discuss interim report
Phase VI: Prepare Final Report	▪ Develop final report ▪ Convene Task Force meeting to present and discuss final report (if needed) ▪ Issue final report

Project Structure and Methodology (con't)

The methodology for the VCCS Distance Learning project was based on the following premises:

- Build on and not repeat the planning work already done
- Involve staff, faculty, administrators, and students as much as possible
- Use PwC to facilitate a VCCS Task Force through a proven planning process
- Assure that the Task Force owns the reports and its recommendations
- Develop a plan that is a concise, compelling mandate for action

Information and data for the analysis were gathered from various sources, including:

- Existing data from individual colleges and the System office
- Existing reports on distance learning (Appendix E)
- Interviews and focus groups with members of the VCCS community (refer to Appendix F for a copy of the interview guide)
- Discussions with Task Force members
- Results of student and faculty surveys on distance learning
- Knowledge of other distance learning governance structures

Section 2

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

Strategic Drivers of Distance Learning

Task force members identified over twenty drivers of distance learning at VCCS. Three drivers emerged as the primary impetus for developing a distance learning strategy: expanding program opportunities, increasing access to students, and responding to market demands. Although each driver is independently important, together they provide a compelling argument for distance learning.

TOP THREE DRIVERS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

1) EXPAND PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES: All VCCS colleges currently offer a number of courses at a distance, with many of them looking to distance learning as the mechanism to provide both new and expanded program opportunities for students.

2) INCREASE ACCESS

- TO RESIDENTS OF VIRGINIA: With a primary mission to serve citizens of the Commonwealth, distance learning extends access to Commonwealth residents not presently served by VCCS.

- TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: Distance learning enables anytime, anyplace learning; over time, distance learning will provide VCCS with the ability to expand program and course offerings to national and international learners.

3) RESPOND TO MARKETPLACE DEMAND: The VCCS is committed to responding to the needs of learners within the State, nationally and internationally, by providing those programs and courses that are high in demand and that respond to student needs to balance work, personal, and professional development pursuits.

Assessing the Current Environment

In Phase II of the project, PwC conducted interviews and focus groups with faculty and administrative personnel from the 23 colleges and the System office. The interview guides were developed to gather different perspectives on current distance learning practices, policies, and issues.

Participants were identified by the colleges and the System office. PwC consultants interviewed 28 individuals and facilitated focus groups with 55 participants. Focus group participants represented three groups within the VCCS community:

- Academic support staff
- Faculty and academic affairs leadership
- Student services staff

These groupings ensured obtaining insight into multiple facets of the distance learning environment. This phase was integral to the buy-in process, as interview and focus group participant feedback helped tailor the development of the governance model.

Summary of Findings: Five Key Themes

Five key themes emerged from the interviews and focus groups. The following pages provide representative quotes that illustrate each of the findings.

1. REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

A. The FTE driven model provides opportunities for colleges to generate additional revenues; however, it also reduces their incentive to take a System-wide perspective on distance learning.

B. Faculty involvement in distance learning has been constrained by unclear faculty workload and compensation policies.

C. Current incentives (e.g., the courseware grant program) are well-received; but they are not tied to market analysis or inventory of existing offerings.

2. STRUCTURAL BALANCE

A. Many examples exist of cooperation, coordination and collaboration between and among colleges; however, inadequate communication and competition limits the potential to leverage knowledge sharing, assets, and resources utilization across the System to maximize benefits to students.

B. There is an inherent tension between the System and individual college and campus autonomy.

3. INTEGRATED SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A. Deficiencies in the delivery of student services, unmet demand for faculty development, and the unreliability and inconsistency of the technology infrastructure are primary inhibitors of growth in distance learning.

B. Faculty development, student services, instructional design, and technical support are cited as important prerequisites to a robust, high-quality, growing distance learning program.

C. Services and support are uneven across the System.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE

A. Programs to stimulate innovation and experimentation with distance learning have been successful; however, there is a growing need to consistently apply standards of quality, reliability, and cost effectiveness.

B. Insufficient communication, coordination, and sharing of outcomes and lessons learned make it difficult to track System-wide progress.

C. VCCS lacks widespread agreement on how to operationalize and measure progress toward the VCCS distance learning vision.

5. VISION

A. A lack of clarity surrounding the distance learning vision results in limited buy-in and lagging execution of distance learning policies and procedures.

B. Colleges recognize and acknowledge their desire for increased System leadership and coordination in distance learning.

Theme 1: Rewards and Incentives

REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

A. The FTE driven model provides opportunities for colleges to generate additional revenues; however, it also reduces their incentive to take a System-wide perspective on distance learning.

- "We live and die by the FTE"
- "The major issue is how to share the FTE's"
- "The funding model doesn't allow for incentives. This negates charitable sharing."

B. Faculty involvement in distance learning has been constrained by unclear faculty workload and compensation policies.

- "We have experimented, but we don't have guidelines for distance learning."
- "Incentive mechanisms are very different across colleges."
- "I don't think we have looked carefully at what class size should be and what it means for faculty workload."

C. Current incentives (e.g., the courseware grant program) are well-received; but they are not tied to market analysis or inventory of existing offerings.

- "Grant activities get people to cooperate together. However, at the programmatic level, I don't think we have really put it together."
- "For colleges to collaborate, they need to be able to see what's in it for them."
- "The whole issue boils down to rewards for doing distance learning without destroying other things we are doing."

Theme 2: Structural Balance

STRUCTURAL BALANCE

A. Many examples exist of cooperation, coordination and collaboration between and among colleges; however, inadequate communication and competition limits the potential to leverage knowledge sharing, assets, and resource utilization across the System to maximize benefits to students.

- "Collaboration exists at a programmatic level."
- "Some colleges perceive their competitors as each other, even more so than entities outside the System."
- "For those faculty and staff who are implementing the VCCS's distance learning initiative, I believe the relationship among the 23 colleges in the VCCS is one of mutual cooperation and advancement...However, I think we all recognize that we are competing for students and limited funds and resources."
- "Cooperation is uneven because people are new to it and there aren't mechanisms in place to support it."

B. There is an inherent tension between the System and individual college and campus autonomy.

- "A strength of the VCCS is the autonomy that allows each college to tailor its services to individual service regions. However, this autonomy is also a weakness because it will be difficult for colleges to move forward in uniformity."
- "The 23 colleges are fiercely autonomous."
- "Colleges are encouraged to be independent. Getting them to work together is like herding cats."
- "There is some tension between standardization and centralization. There needs to be some flexibility to develop your own solutions for some things, but there are also benefits to standardization. There is a trade off. Trying to find the right balance is a challenge."

Theme 3: Integrated Services and Infrastructure

INTEGRATED SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A. Deficiencies in the delivery of student services, unmet demand for faculty development, and the unreliability and inconsistency of the technology infrastructure are primary inhibitors of growth in distance education.

B. Faculty development, student services, instructional design, and technical support are cited as important prerequisites to a robust, high-quality, growing distance learning program.

- "There's no way to check what students are doing at other colleges."
- "I have a strong feeling we are at the point where we are selling a product (e.g., distance learning courses) without the proper student services support systems in place to best serve our distance learners. In order to have a successful distance education program, we must insure that we have appropriate support services available."
- "There are so many demands on local IT support departments, especially for administrative systems, faculty support, and training. This is a tremendous burden, and these folks are not going to be able to provide any additional support. This is a dilemma that the System must step up to."

C. Services and support are uneven across the System.

- "Academic service problems exist, for example, writing centers, math labs; however, they are not being provided consistently online."
- "There is a need for design support staff; we don't have enough people to handle the issue of content conversion and tailoring. These resources are spread thinly across different colleges."
- "The technical support that faculty need is missing at many institutions."

Theme 4: Quality Assurance

QUALITY ASSURANCE

A. Programs to stimulate innovation and experimentation with distance learning have been successful; however, there is a growing need to consistently apply standards of quality, reliability, and cost effectiveness.

- "Colleges will need to lose local discretion to establish System guidelines for distance learning in terms of such policies as class size, faculty rewards, etc."
- "The weakest aspects of distance learning are inconsistent policies and support services."

B. Insufficient communication, coordination, and sharing of outcomes and lessons learned make it difficult to track System-wide progress.

- "Sometimes there are 23 of us trying to reinvent the wheel, whereas the System could develop the initial design and save resources."
- "There is no consistency in the information that is shared; it is uneven and inconsistent; to change this, there needs to be better centralized project management."
- "For all the discussion, people just don't know what others are doing; the lack of student data makes it impossible to know what our students are doing at other schools."

C. VCCS lacks widespread agreement on how to operationalize and measure progress toward the VCCS distance learning vision.

- "There needs to be a push for consistency in quality assurance; it needs to be done, but we haven't quite done anything about it."
- "We have adopted SREB QA measures, but now we are struggling to implement them."

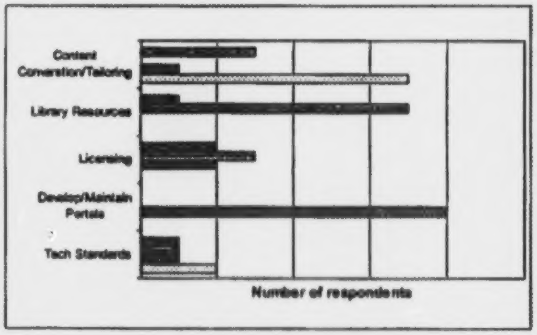
Theme 5: Vision

VISION
A. A lack of clarity surrounding the distance learning vision results in limited buy-in and lagging execution of distance learning policies and procedures. • "The System does a fair job in coordinating distance learning activities, but not in terms of where distance learning ought to go or how it ought to be addressed; there is no common vision for us to buy into." • "Right now, no one is in charge, no one has specific authority over distance learning policies and procedures." • "There doesn't seem to be a lot of vision for what could be; 23 fiefdoms result in 23 different applications." • "The vision is fairly well accepted, but it is so generic that no one knows what it really means."
B. Colleges recognize and acknowledge their desire for increased System leadership and coordination in distance learning. • "We haven't capitalized on the potential synergies; no one has said it's a priority, and thus it hasn't been a priority." • "It is crucial that the new chancellor be supportive of distance education." • "The presidents recognize that VCCS must move forward as a System." • "Colleges would welcome leadership from the System -- they are ready."

Distance Learning Readiness

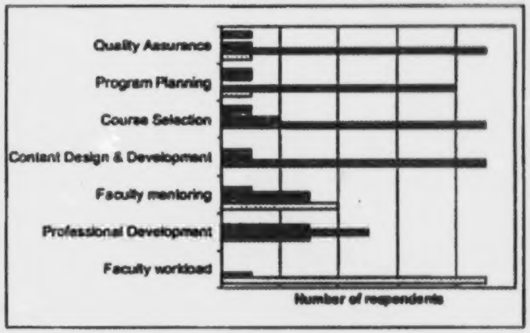
Interview and focus group participants were asked to rate the readiness of VCCS to perform various distance learning support responsibilities. Although there was a fair degree of variability in the responses, It is evident that there are major gaps in VCCS's readiness to provide the level of services required to deliver programs effectively, specifically in the area of student support services.

Academic Support



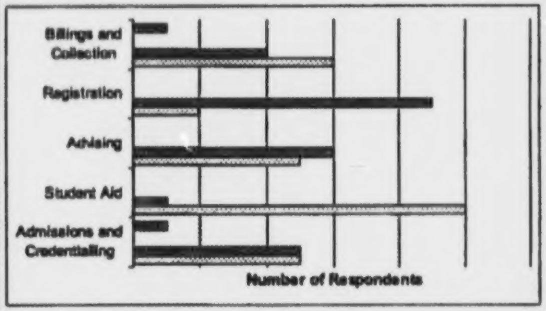
- Very Ready: library resources
- Ready: policies on licensing and technical standards
- Somewhat ready: develop and maintain the distance learning portal
- Not ready: content conversion and tailoring

Faculty and Academic Affairs



- Somewhat ready: quality assurance, program planning, course selection, and content design and development
- Ready: faculty professional development policies
- Not ready: faculty workload issues

Student Support Services



- Not ready: student aid
- Somewhat ready: registration
- Not ready or somewhat ready: admissions, advising, billing

▨ NR	■ SR	■ R	■ VR	■ DK
Not Ready	Somewhat Ready	Ready	Very Ready	Don't Know

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Faculty and Student Survey Results

To supplement the interviews and focus groups, the System office conducted an electronic survey of faculty and students currently engaged in distance learning courses. Three overriding themes, consistent with national findings on distance learning, surfaced from the surveys (see Appendix G for full results.)

CONVENIENCE AND FLEXIBILITY ARE THE CORNERSTONE FOR WHY STUDENTS OPT TO TAKE DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES: Students value the freedom and flexibility distance learning courses provide. Many students reported that this was the only way they could further their education and meet their academic goals. Approximately 55% of the students liked the convenience and flexibility; 40% valued the ability to work at home and at their own pace.

COMMUNICATION ISSUES REMAIN A CHALLENGE TO BOTH FACULTY AND STUDENTS: According to faculty, students have an insatiable appetite for timely feedback from their instructors. Students seek clarification on grades, assignments, and general course information. Students prefer one-to-one personal communication from instructors. Although voicemail is a good alternative, the most frequent form of communication is through email. However, many instructors acknowledged having difficulty responding in a timely manner to upwards of 200 student emails per day. From the students' perspective, approximately 43% of the students in the survey cited inadequate level of interaction and timely feedback as an issue.

STUDENT COMPLETION RATES ARE LOW: Many instructors are concerned about higher drop/fail rates for distance learning courses. This is primarily due to misguided student expectations about distance learning courses, including frequent unfamiliarity with the technology associated with distance learning. On a more subjective note, there is also conjecture that many of the students dropping distance learning courses lack the necessary level of self-motivation and may require the social intercourse and pressure provided by a classroom environment.

Current Environment Conclusions

Several important conclusions emerge from the findings of these interviews and surveys that should inform the development and implementation of a strategic governance model for distance learning for the Virginia Community College System.

- Distance learning at VCCS requires a broadly accepted strategic direction that is widely communicated.
- It also requires a willingness to set priorities among limited and competing resources. Once those priorities are set, the initiative must be sustained and given the opportunity to succeed.
- College leadership and sustained support is paramount to successful distance learning programs and services.
- College autonomy should be balanced with mechanisms that promote communication and collaboration among colleges.
- Students enrolling in distance learning courses and programs should expect consistency across colleges in the delivery of distance learning programs and services.
- Providing consistency requires development of effective support services for faculty and students as well as the infrastructure required to deliver both these services and the instruction.
- The VCCS distance learning strategy and governance structure represents one more step as VCCS seeks to meet the needs of the Commonwealth. This step honors the past and acknowledges that further changes will be made in the future.

Section 3

DEVELOPING THE DISTANCE LEARNING GOVERNANCE MODEL

Developing the Distance Learning Governance Model

Development of the governance model for distance learning required that the Task Force take a series of preliminary steps.

These steps include:

- Confirm the VCCS vision for distance learning
- Develop criteria for evaluating alternative governance models
- Identify the building blocks of the governance model

Vision for Distance Learning at VCCS

Using a series of visioning exercises conducted over two Task Force meetings, the Task Force developed a vision that embraced the key elements of a successful distance learning program for VCCS.

VCCS vision for distance learning:

The Virginia Community College System provides world class distance learning programs and services that respond to the needs of the Commonwealth

Achieving this vision means:
- Providing strong, collective college leadership
- Providing broadly accessible, consistently high quality distance learning instruction and support for both students and faculty across all colleges
- Establishing and supporting a set of program priorities that respond to unique demands and that cannot be efficiently addressed in any other way
- Assuring that those programs targeted as priorities meet the quality benchmarks applied to programs acknowledged as outstanding for VCCS, Virginia and beyond

Criteria for Evaluating Governance Models

Recognizing that the governance model should be comprehensive yet delimiting, the Task force developed a set of criteria for evaluating alternative governance models and their respective components. These criteria acknowledge that, above all else, the distance learning model for VCCS must deliver high quality and promote student access (Level 1 Criteria).

Level 1 Criteria	**1) Ensure consistently high quality**	Ensure reliable, high level quality across all distance learning offerings regardless of discipline or college
	2) Increase student access	Embody processes and procedures that are student-centric and increase access to learning
Level 2 Criteria	**3) Leverage the System**	Incorporate and build upon the assets of the individual colleges and capitalize economies of scale
	4) Provide sustainability and scalability	Be flexible and sufficiently adaptable to respond to evolving distance learning markets and technology and accommodate significant growth
	5) Assure appropriate incentives & rewards	Assure appropriate incentives and rewards for institutions, as well as individuals responsible for distance learning

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Governance Model Building Blocks for Distance Learning

The governance model for distance learning is formulated on a foundation of seven building blocks.

BUILDING BLOCK 1: TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE serves as the technical foundation for the electronic delivery of instruction and support to students and faculty.

BUILDING BLOCK 2: DISTANCE LEARNING DELIVERY MODES encompass the multiple ways in which distance learning can be delivered.

BUILDING BLOCK 3: SUPPORT SERVICES provide students and faculty with the support they need to take or teach a distance learning course.

BUILDING BLOCK 4: LEADERSHIP is needed to strategically guide distance learning initiatives and ensure activities are aligned with the vision.

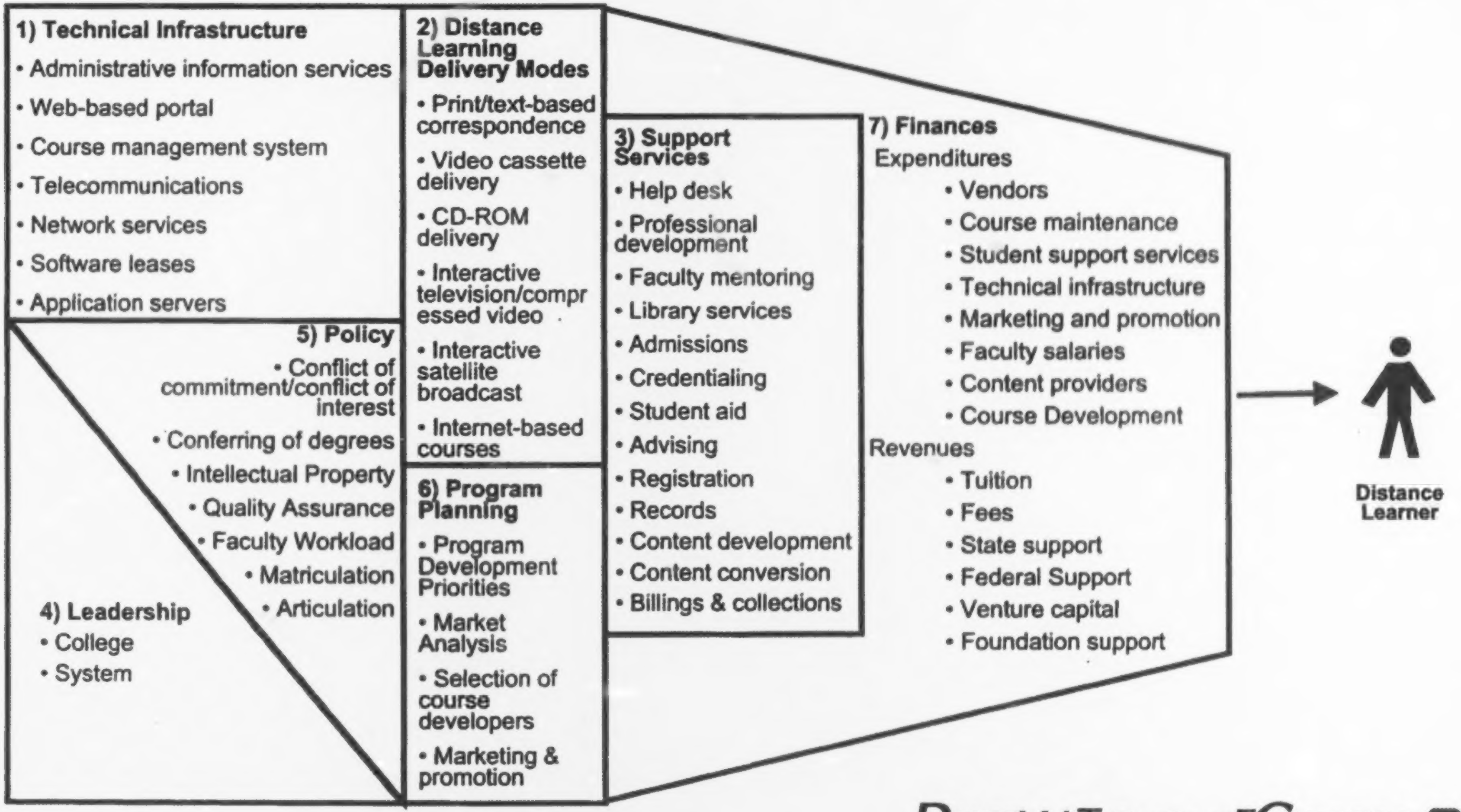
BUILDING BLOCK 5: POLICY provides the context for making decisions.

BUILDING BLOCK 6: PROGRAM PLANNING is required to make strategic decisions about program priorities and marketing.

BUILDING BLOCK 7: FINANCES include expenditure and revenue decisions that need to be made to sustain distance learning.

Many of the elements that make up each of the building blocks are listed in the following page.

Examples of Governance Model Building Blocks for Distance Learning



1) Technical Infrastructure
- Administrative information services
- Web-based portal
- Course management system
- Telecommunications
- Network services
- Software leases
- Application servers

2) Distance Learning Delivery Modes
- Print/text-based correspondence
- Video cassette delivery
- CD-ROM delivery
- Interactive television/compressed video
- Interactive satellite broadcast
- Internet-based courses

3) Support Services
- Help desk
- Professional development
- Faculty mentoring
- Library services
- Admissions
- Credentialing
- Student aid
- Advising
- Registration
- Records
- Content development
- Content conversion
- Billings & collections

4) Leadership
- College
- System

5) Policy
- Conflict of commitment/conflict of interest
- Conferring of degrees
- Intellectual Property
- Quality Assurance
- Faculty Workload
- Matriculation
- Articulation

6) Program Planning
- Program Development Priorities
- Market Analysis
- Selection of course developers
- Marketing & promotion

7) Finances

Expenditures
- Vendors
- Course maintenance
- Student support services
- Technical infrastructure
- Marketing and promotion
- Faculty salaries
- Content providers
- Course Development

Revenues
- Tuition
- Fees
- State support
- Federal Support
- Venture capital
- Foundation support

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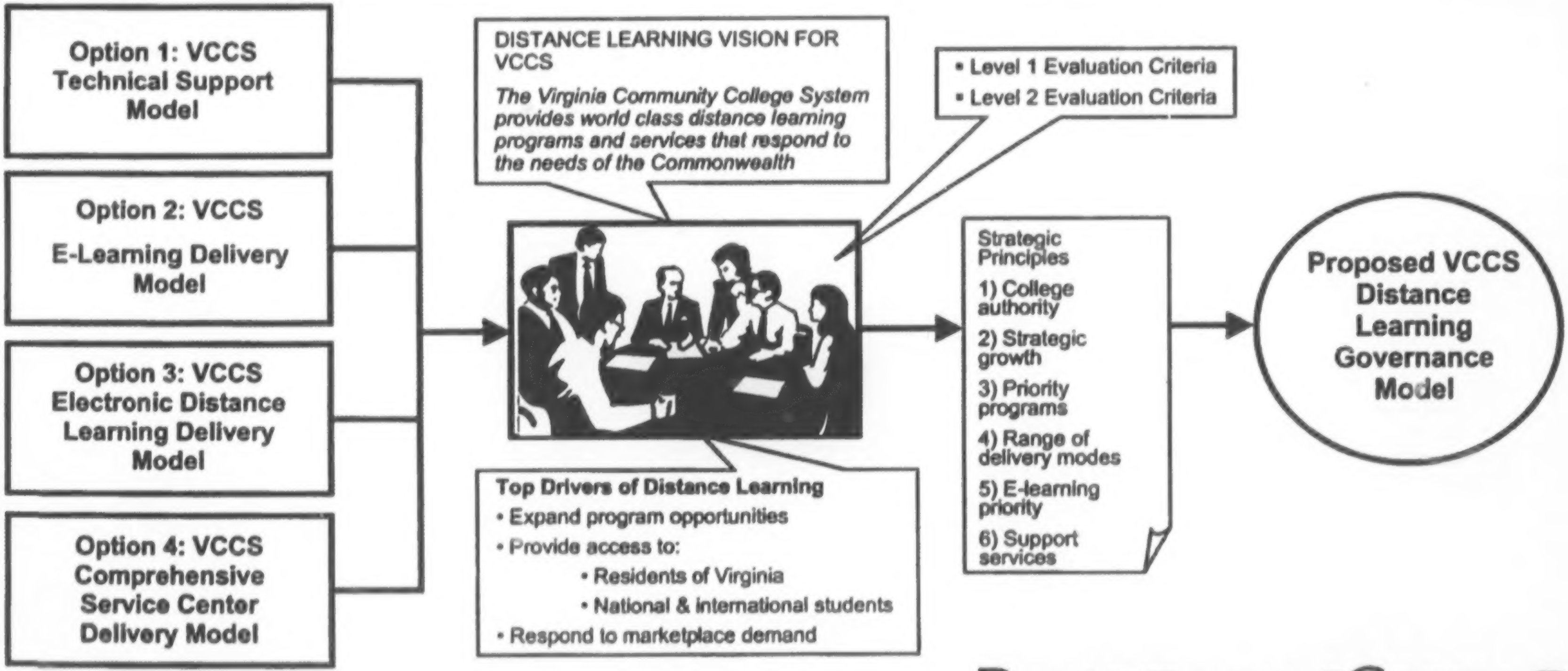
Section 4

THE DISTANCE LEARNING GOVERNANCE MODEL

Governance Model Selection

The PricewaterhouseCoopers consultants developed four alternative governance models for review by the distance learning Task Force (see Appendix H for a complete description of each option). The Task Force members discussed each model separately, applied the previously established evaluation criteria, and developed an overall score for each model. From this dialogue, the Task Force generated a set of model strategic principles, along with a proposed model that incorporates elements of each of the discussion options.



Option 1: VCCS Technical Support Model

Option 2: VCCS E-Learning Delivery Model

Option 3: VCCS Electronic Distance Learning Delivery Model

Option 4: VCCS Comprehensive Service Center Delivery Model

DISTANCE LEARNING VISION FOR VCCS

The Virginia Community College System provides world class distance learning programs and services that respond to the needs of the Commonwealth

- Level 1 Evaluation Criteria
- Level 2 Evaluation Criteria

Top Drivers of Distance Learning

- Expand program opportunities
- Provide access to:
  - Residents of Virginia
  - National & international students
- Respond to marketplace demand

Strategic Principles

1) College authority
2) Strategic growth
3) Priority programs
4) Range of delivery modes
5) E-learning priority
6) Support services

Proposed VCCS Distance Learning Governance Model

Strategic Principles: Governance Model

Six strategic principles provide the framework of the proposed VCCS distance learning governance model. These principles emerged from the review of previous distance learning reports, the research findings from this project, the VCCS vision statement for distance learning, and Task Force review and evaluation of four alternative models. Operational considerations raised by these principles are addressed in the description of the proposed model.

- **Retain college authority over academic decisions:** The Colleges should remain the primary arbiters of academic decisions, as well as the source of instructional content and delivery. This principle is fundamental to the governance and academic culture of the Virginia Community College System as well as its operations.

- **Sustain measured strategic growth:** VCCS's future in distance learning requires that VCCS-endorsed programs and courses be strategically developed to maintain high-quality instruction and student support, which will, in turn, ensure sustained growth.

- **Identify a number of strategic program priorities:** In an effort to establish premier brand recognition within the larger distance learning market, VCCS should develop a number of world class multi-service market programs that address needs not traditionally met by programs developed for local service markets. Such programs should be developed and delivered by a coalition of VCCS colleges, marketed broadly through a System-supported web portal, and should meet the highest quality standards for content and technical, faculty, and learner support services, as well as faculty-student interactions.

- **Support a broad range of electronic delivery modes:** Individual colleges and clusters of colleges will continue to provide distance learning instruction across a broad range of electronic delivery modes, including CD-ROM, compressed video, and the Internet.

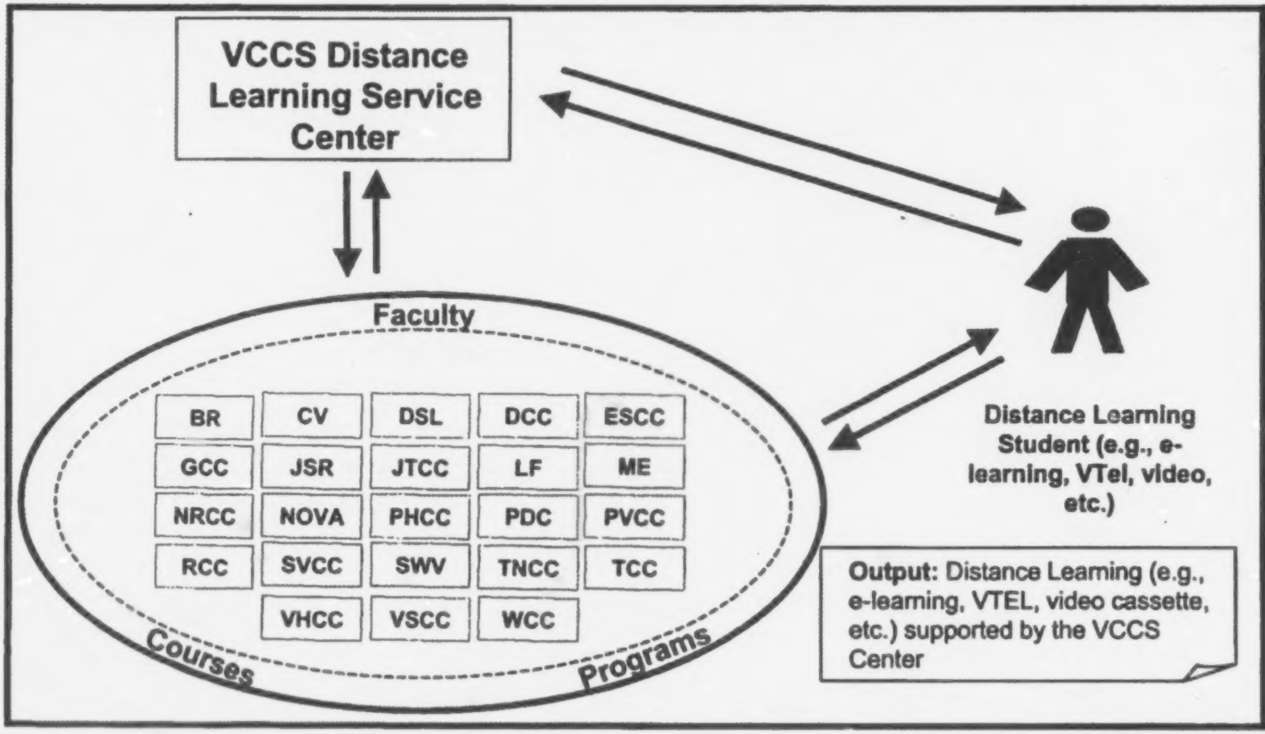
Strategic Principles (con't)

- **Establish e-learning programs as the highest priority for new distance learning program development:** Although VCCS will continue to support multiple electronic delivery modes, resource priority will be given to the targeted development of Internet-based courses and programs that match faculty expertise and demonstrated demand.
- **Provide System-wide support for distance learning technical infrastructure, academic support, and student services:** Consistent with the variety of distance learning delivery modes provided across the 23 colleges, the colleges and System offices together will provide infrastructure support for a broad range of electronic delivery modes; the level of support provided by the colleges and the System will vary depending on funding and the overall use of instructional technology by the colleges and as new technologies emerge and student interest and demand changes. To the extent possible, the colleges should strive to establish a single face to the market across distance learning programs, with a single face required for multi-service market brand programs.

These six strategic principles build on the distance learning achievements of the colleges and set the stage for achieving the VCCS vision of providing high quality, readily accessible distance learning. The strategic principles endorse taking a student-centered approach to learning and provide support services that ensure student success and faculty development.

The Proposed VCCS Distance Learning Governance Model

The proposed governance model focuses on the student as learner and relies on effective interactions among the learner, the colleges, and a VCCS Distance Learning Service Center. In the following pages, the functions and responsibilities that make up the distance learning "value chain" are presented for the colleges and for the VCCS Distance Learning Service Center.


VCCS Distance Learning Service Center
Faculty
Courses
Programs
Distance Learning Student (e.g., e-learning, VTel, video, etc.)

BR	CV	DSL	DCC	ESCC
GCC	JSR	JTCC	LF	ME
NRCC	NOVA	PHCC	PDC	PVCC
RCC	SVCC	SWV	TNCC	TCC
	VHCC	VSCC	WCC	

Output: Distance Learning (e.g., e-learning, VTEL, video cassette, etc.) supported by the VCCS Center

Overriding Characteristics

- VCCS develops, promotes and supports all modes of electronic distance learning delivery across all colleges.
- The VCCS, through the colleges and the Distance Learning Service Center, provides a seamless interface of distance learning support services for students and faculty.
- The Distance Learning Service Center supports the VCCS colleges in the development and delivery of electronic distance learning programs tailored to market demands.

The Proposed Distance Learning Governance Model: College and Service Center Responsibilities

College Responsibilities

ENROLL STUDENTS: Supported by the VCCS website, students apply to any college offering a specific program or course; colleges are responsible for ensuring that only applicants that meet the college's program requirements are enrolled.

DELIVER COURSES: All courses and programs are delivered solely by the colleges and their faculty.

MAINTAIN ACADEMIC QUALITY: Colleges ensure academic quality for both local and broad service market academic quality.

CONFER DEGREES: Students matriculate in and graduate from any college offering a particular distance learning program. The college and its departments and faculty confer degrees only if the student meets the prescribed academic requirements.

COORDINATE CLICK AND MORTAR APPROACH: The VCCS Distance Learning Service Center leverages the physical assets of the VCCS colleges, with coordination provided by the individual colleges.

FACULTY WORKLOAD AND DEVELOPMENT: Each college applies local faculty incentive and workload guidelines, consistent with System policies; colleges, along with the VCCS Distance Learning Service Center, provide training and professional development support.

RETAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR DELIVERY OF NON-ELECTRONIC CORRESPONSDENCE STUDY: Each college is responsible for determining what correspondence study delivery it should support and sustain.

VCCS Distance Learning Service Center Responsibilities

LAUNCH AND MARKET DISTANCE LEARNING INITIATIVES: The VCCS Distance Learning Service Center conducts market research for strategic decision-making, develops initiatives targeted at specific learner segments, assesses program success, adjusts offerings in accord with market demands, and supports college development of multi-service market brand programs.

PROVIDE SUPPORT SERVICES: The VCCS Distance Learning Service Center is responsible for providing faculty and learner support and student services for multi-service market brand programs and for providing support interfaces with those services provided by the colleges to students enrolled in local service market programs.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN THE DISTANCE LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE: The VCCS Distance Learning Service Center maintains the distance learning portal, administers databases, supports faculty development, and sets policies on the learning management platform.

FACILITATE AND COORDINATE COLLEGE CONTENT AND SERVICES: The VCCS Distance Learning Service Center facilitates the aggregation of content from various colleges according to college strengths, level of department interest, availability of faculty resources, and VCCS distance learning program strategic priorities. The Center works with faculty to convert content to create a standard "look" across courses and to maximize the potential of the technology.

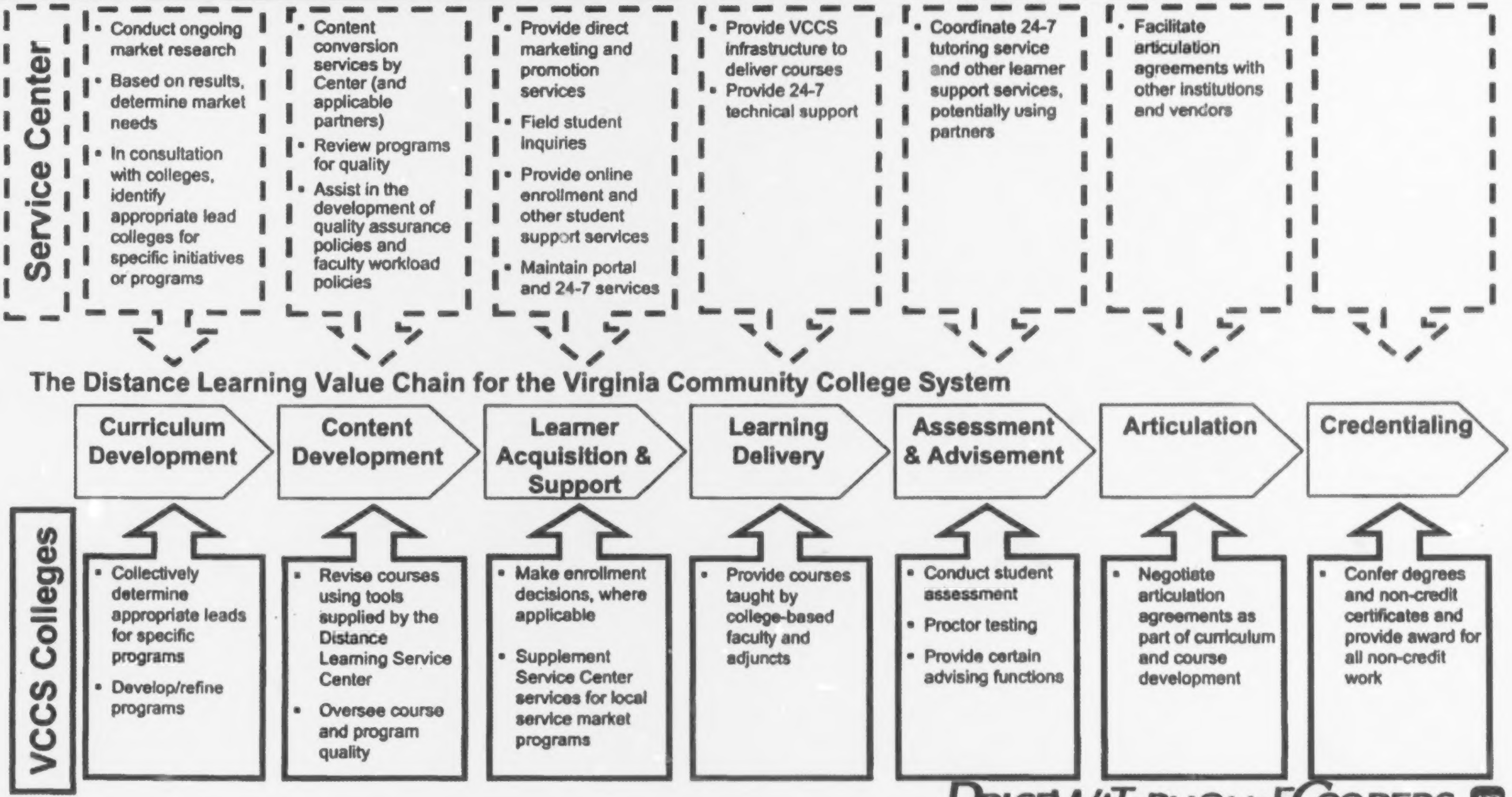
PROPOSE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: The VCCS Distance Learning Service Center is responsible for proposing strategic alliances to augment technical skills, content, and marketing capabilities. The colleges decide whether or not to partner with the technical and service providers.

COORDINATE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES AND STANDARDS: The VCCS Distance Learning Service Center, in conjunction with the colleges, develops policies to ensure quality, equitable faculty workload and intellectual property standards.

PROVIDE THE DISTANCE LEARNING TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE: The VCCS Distance Learning Service Center, working with the colleges, establishes technology standards, and supports resolution of technology issues that impact delivery of distance learning.

The Proposed Distance Learning Organizational Model: Value Chain Activities

The VCCS, through the Distance Learning Service Center, provides a seamless interface of distance learning support services for students and faculty. The Service Center supports the 23 colleges in the delivery of electronic distance learning programs tailored to market demands.



The Distance Learning Value Chain for the Virginia Community College System

The Distance Learning Value Chain for the Virginia Community College System	Service Center	VCCS Colleges
Curriculum Development	• Conduct ongoing market research • Based on results, determine market needs • In consultation with colleges, identify appropriate lead colleges for specific initiatives or programs	• Collectively determine appropriate leads for specific programs • Develop/refine programs
Content Development	• Content conversion services by Center (and applicable partners) • Review programs for quality • Assist in the development of quality assurance policies and faculty workload policies	• Revise courses using tools supplied by the Distance Learning Service Center • Oversee course and program quality
Learner Acquisition & Support	• Provide direct marketing and promotion services • Field student inquiries • Provide online enrollment and other student support services • Maintain portal and 24-7 services	• Make enrollment decisions, where applicable • Supplement Service Center services for local service market programs
Learning Delivery	• Provide VCCS infrastructure to deliver courses • Provide 24-7 technical support	• Provide courses taught by college-based faculty and adjuncts
Assessment & Advisement	• Coordinate 24-7 tutoring service and other learner support services, potentially using partners	• Conduct student assessment • Proctor testing • Provide certain advising functions
Articulation	• Facilitate articulation agreements with other institutions and vendors	• Negotiate articulation agreements as part of curriculum and course development
Credentialing		• Confer degrees and non-credit certificates and provide award for all non-credit work

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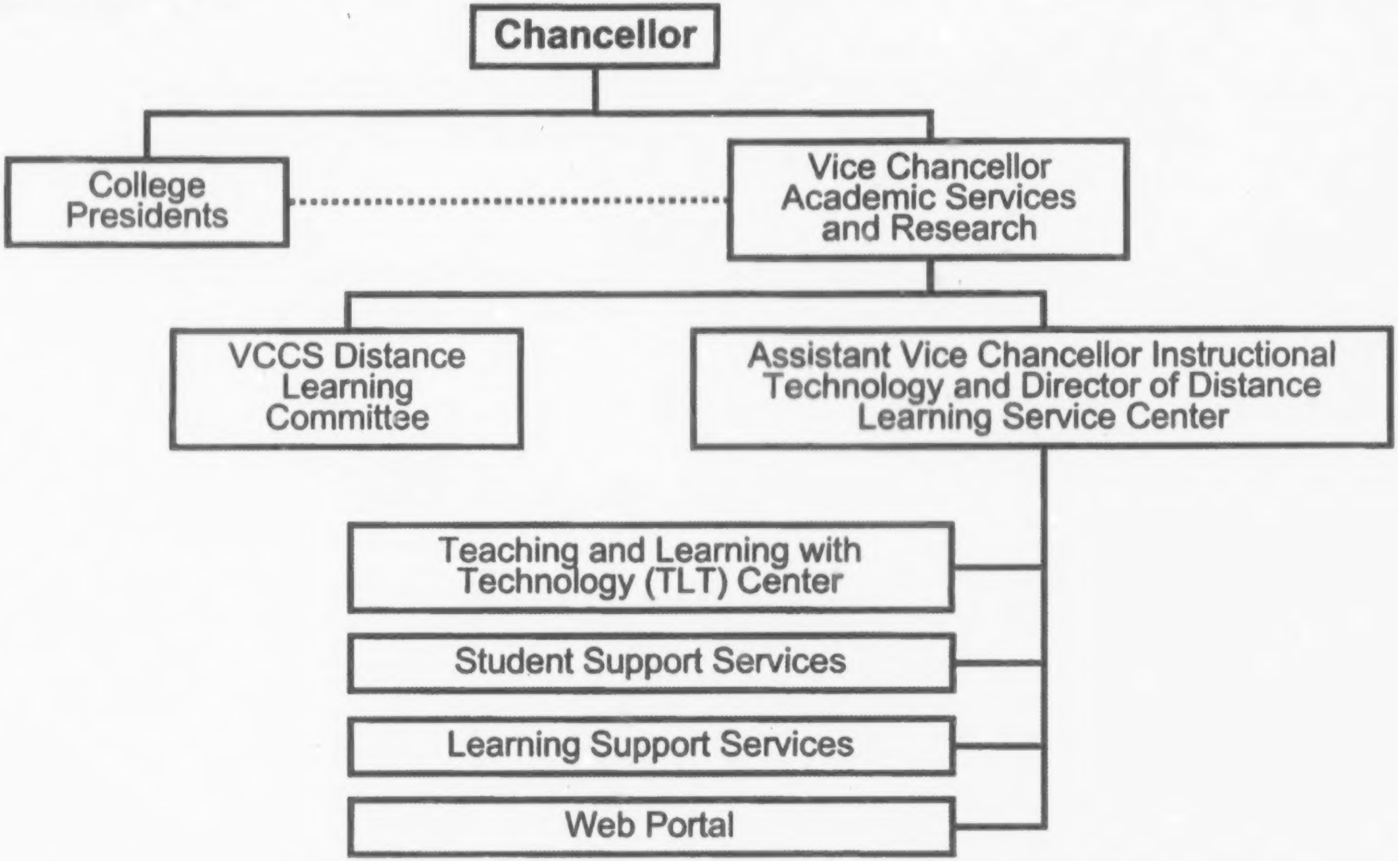
Proposed VCCS Distance Learning Organizational Support Structure*



- Chancellor
  - College Presidents
  - Vice Chancellor Academic Services and Research
    - VCCS Distance Learning Committee
    - Assistant Vice Chancellor Instructional Technology and Director of Distance Learning Service Center
      - Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) Center
      - Student Support Services
      - Learning Support Services
      - Web Portal

* Diagram does not reflect the faculty roles and responsibilities

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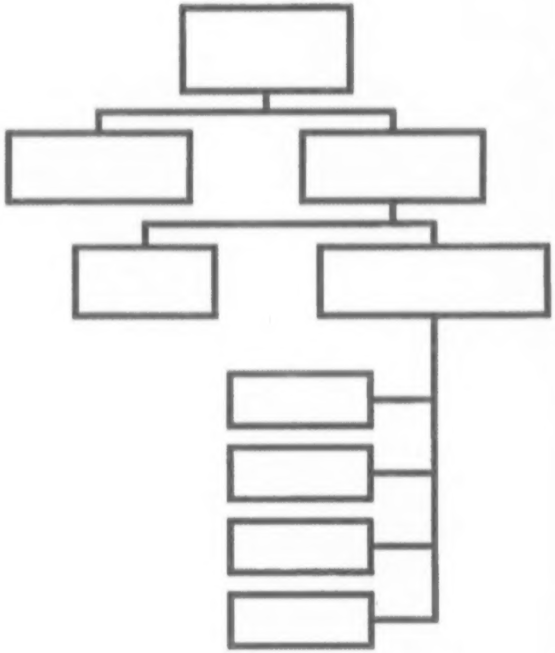
Organization Chart Description

The VCCS distance learning organization reflects the significant contributions of leadership, faculty, and staff support in the development and delivery of the System's distance learning programs and courses.

Overall direction for distance learning depends on the combined leadership of executive and senior administrators and college representation through the VCCS Distance Learning Committee.

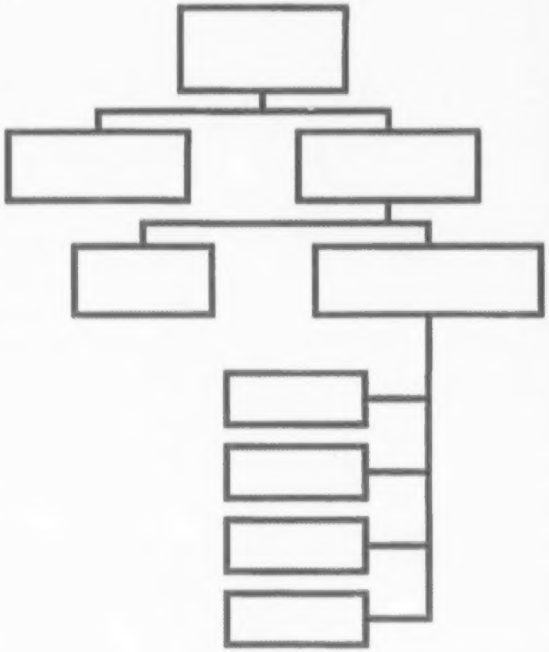
- The Chancellor is responsible for articulating the overall role of distance learning among the System's priorities.
- The Vice Chancellor for Academic Services and Research works with the Presidents and the Vice Chancellor of Information Technology Services to facilitate distance learning policy and direction among the 23 colleges and to leverage appropriate IT support.
- The VCCS Distance Learning Committee, reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Services and Research, is responsible for developing and advising on overall policy and direction for distance learning; the committee membership includes deans, faculty, and functional support personnel from the colleges.
- The Assistant Vice Chancellor for Instructional Technology and Director of the Distance Learning Service Center provides day-to-day leadership and coordination of distance learning both centrally and across the System.



Organization Chart Description (con't)

Functional and support services staff implement distance learning programs aligned with the mission and vision of the VCCS organization.

- Four support divisions report to the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Instructional Technology and Director of the Distance Learning Service Center:
  - **Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) Center:** Serves as the support arm for faculty involved in distance learning courses and programs. The Center provides instructional design support services, and serves as a focal point for faculty members to exchange insights about and experiences with instructional technology, including the Internet, telecommunications, and networks.
  - **Student Support Services Unit:** Provides distance learning students with student-centered logistical support services, e.g., online enrollment services.
  - **Learning Support Services Unit:** Ensures that distance learning students are provided with learning support services to promote student success, e.g., tutoring, advising, exam proctoring, placement testing, online training, and assessment.
  - **Web Portal Unit:** Develops and maintains the design and content of the VCCS distance learning portal.



Section 5

FUNDING STRATEGIES FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

Introduction

Because of the extensive role of technology in both the delivery and support of distance learning, financial planning for distance learning is integrally linked to funding of the technology infrastructure.

A recent national report* on the financing of the technology infrastructure provides important insight for the development of funding strategies for VCCS distance learning. Among the report's observations and conclusions are:

- Leaders of higher education institutions consistently report information technology funding and staffing and distance learning among the top four strategic issues facing them
- Although more institutions report the need for a closer link between technology planning and financial planning, the predominant practice continues to be an *ad hoc* approach to funding including year-end savings, temporary allocations, and one-time state appropriations
  - To some degree, this can be attributed to the practice of driving the funding process by the need for specific technology rather than by an overall vision of the role of technology in serving the broader institutional vision
  - Across the country, ad hoc planning and budgeting has proven to be inadequate, unsustainable and detrimental to the long term viability of IT projects
- Development of strategic funding plans for technology require redefining the technology infrastructure into three broad clusters
  - Building infrastructure--facility-related components needed to make the technology operate
  - Systems infrastructure--the hardware and software that connect the various technology components
  - Personnel infrastructure--the human resources required to assure the efficient operations of the technology infrastructure
- Effective IT funding strategies require aligning revenue solutions with strategic initiatives; this means:
  - Recognizing technology funding as an operating expense rather than as a capital expenditure
  - Establishing solutions that provide renewable or life-cycle funding for technology
  - Recognizing that personnel represents a large, and growing, portion of the funding required for IT

***R. A. Phipps and J.V. Wellman. *Funding the "Inforstructure": A Guide to Financing Technology Infrastructure In Higher Education*. The Institute for Higher Education Policy, Volume 3, No. 2, April 2001.**

Distance Learning Delivery Revenues and Expenditures

The distance learning funding strategy adopted by VCCS must consider both the resources expended to develop, support, and deliver distance learning and the revenue sources available for its support. At present, both the System and the colleges incur and share many of the expenditures.

Expenditures

Technical Infrastructure

- Information systems
- Application servers
- Telecommunications
- Network servers
- Web portal
- Maintenance fees
- Software leases

Content

- Development
- Maintenance
- External providers
  - Learning objects
  - Full courses

Personnel

- Faculty
  - Salaries
  - Extra compensation
  - Release time
- Instructional designers
- Web developers
- Graphic designers
- Help desk
- Tutors
- Advisors
- Engineers
- Marketing/promotion
- System administration

Revenues

Students

- Tuition
- User fees

External support

- Federal funding
- State funding
- Foundations
- Venture capital

Income generation

- Licensing
- Royalties

Alternative Funding Models

The Task Force discussed four high-level models as a framework for analyzing the funding alternatives and endorsing a strategy for financing VCCS distance learning initiatives.

The four models (see Appendix I for a high-level depiction of each model) are:

- Off-the-Top Funding Model
- Development Fee Funding Model
- User Fee Funding Model
- Revenue Sharing Funding Model

For each model, the Task Force reviewed how revenues and expenditures would theoretically track to the colleges and to the System. Following a brief examination of each model and its attributes, the Task Force identified funding issues that transcend all models, and subsequently set forth a multi-pronged funding strategy.

In preparing the high-level descriptions of each of the models discussed by the Task Force, PwC incorporated elements of a variety of strategies currently employed in American higher education, e.g., debt financing (usually used for long-term capital investments); revolving funds (seed money repaid through revenue); user fees (e.g., instructional services or technology fees); and internal recharge systems. Alternatives specifically not considered by the Task Force were e-commerce and the creation of a for-profit subsidiary; these options were considered a poor fit for VCCS public service mission.

Strategic Principles: Funding Models

Regardless of the model, a number of factors cut across any funding strategy that VCCS considers.

- Distance learning--and more broadly instructional technology--requires sustained investment, or capitalization, at the System level
- The investment strategy must consider:
  - The size of the initial, or start-up, investment
  - The projected growth of the investment
  - The source of the investment--generation of new revenues or redistribution of existing revenues
- Although the prospect for new appropriation dollars to support development and delivery of distance learning is remote in the immediate future, VCCS should be diligent in its continuing pursuit of support for distance learning from the Commonwealth of Virginia
- The investment strategy must consider the degree to which students should bear the cost of distance learning through user or "convenience" fees
- Although the funding alternatives seek to assure equitable opportunity across all the colleges, equitable cannot always be synonymous with equal
  - A small college's share in support of a VCCS initiative, although proportionate to its base, can have greater impact on programs and services provided by the college because of the narrower operational margins

Multi-Pronged Funding Strategy

The Task Force endorses a multi-pronged funding strategy. Fundamental to this strategy is the acknowledgement that the colleges have already contributed significant "off-the-top" resources to support System-wide distance learning initiatives.

- **Focus current System-level resources for distance learning on the development of the Distance Learning Service Center**
  - Some initial staffing and activity of the Distance Learning Service Center should be supported by a reallocation of VCCS professional staff and support resources currently supporting professional training and content development
  - Some System resources that are not permanently committed should also be identified and made available to demonstrate System commitment to distance learning
  - Temporary assignment of college-based staff to the Distance Learning Service Center can also accelerate the start-up of the Service Center and promote the principle of collaboration
- **Commit to the principle of "measured strategic growth"**
  - Limitations in funding necessitate deliberate, restrained growth in the activities and staffing levels of the Service Center so as to not jeopardize the quality of existing programs
  - Establishing priorities in program development and support is critical; the highest priority must be given to strategic multi-service market brand programs
  - Multi-service market brand programs must be developed and delivered at a level that will support the vision of world class distance learning
- **Develop a successful track record to establish the business case for new, permanent General Assembly funds**
  - To garner external support, especially new funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia, VCCS must establish a strong business case and value proposition for distance learning
  - Development of a business case requires sound documentation of demand, as well as a thorough assessment of the impact and effectiveness of VCCS distance learning programs

Multi-Pronged Funding Strategy (con't)

- **Utilize student fees to provide a sustainable source of distance learning resources**
  - Increase the current technology fee for all students by 50 cents to $2.00 per credit hour
    - The additional resources generated should be directed entirely to the colleges to provide improved support services for all students taking courses using instructional technology
  - Create a distance learning instructional fee at a rate of 20 percent of tuition; this funding strategy:
    - Acknowledges the significantly greater cost of developing and delivering Internet-based instruction
    - Is supported by a well-established economic principle of paying a premium price for convenience
    - Ties the fee amount to the level of tuition, assuring that funding for distance learning has a built-in inflator
    - Is consistent with that taken by several institutions offering both traditional and distance delivery
  - Advise qualifying students about student aid opportunities that reduce the financial impact of the fees
  - Devise a formula whereby revenues from the distance learning instructional fee are shared between the Distance Learning Service Center and the colleges
    - Course development costs for priority multi-service market brand programs, although funded through the Distance Learning Service Center, are essentially passed through to the colleges
    - The sharing formula should be tied to course-development amortization
    - The formula should be adjusted in keeping with additional Commonwealth funding
- **Allocate tuition revenues for distance learning delivery directly to the colleges to assure maximum commitment by the colleges to the VCCS distance learning vision and assure proper implementation of distance learning initiatives**
  - This aspect of the strategy should maximize the opportunity for those colleges ready to invest academically and financially in distance learning and minimize the risk for those who do not choose to participate

Distance Learning Service Center Funding Scenario Assumptions

The planning scenario developed by the Task Force uses the following enrollment and operational assumptions. The actual experience will be impacted by a number of factors, including distance learning policy decisions, the pace in which new programs can be developed and delivered, the availability of presently unidentified resources, and appropriations decisions by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

- Distance learning enrollment growth and tuition assumptions
  - Enrollment growth will accelerate 2 percent per year from 10 percent in 2000-01 to 20 percent in 2005-06
  - Distance learning enrollments during that five-year period will grown from 42,250 to approximately 90,000
  - Tuition by 2005-06 will increase $5 from $38 per credit hour to $43 per credit hour
- At current enrollment levels, the colleges will receive an immediate growth in revenues from the 50 cents increase in the technology fee of approximately $1.2 million
  - Assuming a conservative growth in student credit hour production System-wide of 5 percent per year, the increase in the technology fee will produce $1.8 million dollars in revenue
  - These resources will be applied directly to provide instructional technology support for both resident instruction and distance learning program delivery by the colleges
- Support services for instructional technology--both resident instruction and distance learning--will be provided by a combination of college-based and Distance Learning Service Center support (see Appendix J for a description of possible service paths and learner service coverage)
- A significant portion of the content development funds derived from the distance learning instructional fee to support continuing development of multi-service market brand programs are passed back to the colleges
  - Increases in the distribution of funds from the distance learning instructional fee to the colleges will depend on the rate of the enrollment growth and hence the amortization of the program development for each program

Distance Learning Funding Scenario

In accord with the proposed multi-pronged funding strategy, and building on a projection of distance learning enrollments of approximately 90,000 by AY 2006, the Task Force offers the following revenues and expenditures planning scenario for the Distance Learning Service Center.

SERVICE CENTER EXPENDITURES (see Appendix K for details)	
Continuing operational costs	
- Hardware/software payments & maintenance	**$950,000**
- Content development	**$1,400,000**
- Student services, learning services, course administration, professional development and training	**$935,000**
- Utility engineers, customer support center analysts	**$325,000**
TOTAL	**$3,610.000**

SERVICE CENTER REVENUES (2005-06)	
Current System budget (e.g., content development and professional development)	**$740,000**
System IT Support	**$300,000**
New System Support (Chancellor)	**$250,000**
New Funding (e.g., state appropriation, federal support, and/or distance learning instructional fee--90,000 x (.20) ($43 per credit x 3 credits) = $2.32M)	**$2,320,000**
TOTAL	**$3,610,000**

College Revenues from Technology Fee Increase

2001-02	**$1.2 million**
2005-06	**$1.8 million**

Funding Strategy Conclusions

As VCCS links the distance learning funding strategy to the implementation of the proposed distance learning governance structure, there are several factors that should guide the overall process.

- **Determination of the funding strategies adopted by VCCS rests with the System chancellor and the college presidents; inevitably, that strategy will be a combination of funding solutions**
- **Establishing distance learning specifically, and instructional technology more broadly, as vibrant and viable contributors to the VCCS learning environment requires significant and stable funding**
  - This funding is required to support the creation and upgrade of the physical infrastructure and the human capital that drives both the development of content and the learning process
  - In all likelihood, VCCS cannot anticipate receiving significant new state resources to fund expanded distance learning initiatives in the immediate timeframe
- **In the absence of significant new resources from the Commonwealth of Virginia, alternative revenues must be identified to achieve the vision**
  - Both the System and college leadership must leverage current resources to maximize the net contribution to distance learning
  - A distance learning instructional fee is the most stable means to generate sufficient new revenues to build and sustain the distance learning programs and support functions
  - The distance learning instructional fee must be instituted with all sensitivity to the financial impact on students and be effectively coordinated with student aid programs
  - In the longer term, other revenues might be generated through the licensing and delivery of VCCS distance learning programs, content, and services

Funding Strategy Conclusions (con't)

- **The funding strategy causes minimal disruption of ongoing resident education programs and services at the colleges**
  - With the revenue stream of a distance learning instructional fee, colleges can continue to maximize their revenue stream through FTE-generated tuition
  - The increase in the technology fee provides significant and immediate resources to increase the instructional technology support service to both resident instruction and distance learning students

Section 6

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Implementation Considerations

Concurrent with the adoption of the distance learning governance model and funding plan, the VCCS will need to consider a number of implementation issues. Solutions to these issues will accelerate VCCS' move to distance learning, as well as promote the VCCS community's buy-in for the distance learning vision and governance plan.

The list of implementation considerations presented in this section is not exhaustive, but it contains many of the issues that VCCS must address in the near term. The list is categorized into the following themes:

- Strategic Considerations
- Organizational Considerations
- Technology Considerations
- Delivery Considerations for:
  - Students
  - Faculty
  - Programs
- Policy Considerations
- Process Considerations

Implementation Considerations (con't)

Implementation Items	Purpose	Suggested Responsibility
I. Strategic Considerations		
A. Implementation Strategy	Develop an implementation and communications plan for guiding resolution of implementation issues	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor; VCCS Distance Learning Committee; Vice Chancellor for IT Services
B. Financial Plan	Embrace a strategy for funding distance learning priorities	Chancellor; Vice Chancellor Finance; Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Vice Chancellor for IT Services; Presidents; Assistant Vice Chancellor
C. Program Development Priorities	Determine what process will be used to identify e-learning course and program strategic priorities	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor; VCCS Distance Learning Committee; Presidents
D. Strategic Alliance Options	Determine possible alliance partners; meet with possible alliance and e-learning partners to discuss potential arrangements	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor; IT organization; VCCS Distance Learning Committee
E. Legislative Issues	Review legislation that might need to be changed (or new legislation) that will enable e-learning; develop strategy to "educate" the legislature on e-learning and set realistic expectations	Chancellor; Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor; Presidents; VCCS Lobbyist
II. Organizational Considerations		
A. Cost/Revenue Scenarios	Develop alternative cost/revenue scenarios for staffing and operating the Distance Learning Service Center	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor; Vice Chancellor for IT
B. VCCS Distance Learning Committee	Define roles and responsibilities of VCCS Distance Learning Committee, determine membership representation, and develop appointment process	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor; Presidents; Deans
C. Distance Learning Service Center Coordinators	Develop position descriptions, recruit and select coordinators	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor; VCCS Distance Learning Committee
D. E-Learning Support Staff	Determine levels of support staff required to support e-learning program priorities; develop position descriptions; allocate funds; hire staff	Assistant Vice Chancellor; Vice Chancellor for IT Services; VCCS Distance Learning Committee

Implementation Considerations (con't)

Implementation Items	Purpose	Suggested Responsibility
III. Technology Considerations		
A. Development of Technology Services & Standards	Determine standard platforms for e-learning (e.g., course management systems)	Assistant Vice Chancellor; Vice Chancellor for IT Services; VCCS Distance Learning Committee
B. Portal Design	Design e-learning portal; link student services portal and e-learning portal	Web Portal Coordinator; IT Staff; Functional Staff
IV. Delivery Considerations -- Students		
A. Learning Services	Define the necessary learning support services for an e-learning environment; identify best practices; apply customer relationship management to e-learning	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor
B. Library Support	Determine what level of library support is optimal for e-learning and how access to resources and services should be provided	Assistant Vice Chancellor; Vice Chancellor Academic Services; College Library Personnel
C. Student Services	Define the necessary student services for an e-learning environment; identify best practices; apply customer relationship management to e-learning	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor
V. Delivery Considerations -- Faculty		
A. Professional Development	Determine professional development strategies that build a stronger base for e-learning	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor
B. Learning Design	Identify emerging models and tools for online pedagogy, content conversion; establish best-in-class approach; develop assessment methods	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor

Implementation Considerations (con't)

Implementation Items	Purpose	Suggested Responsibility
VI. Delivery Considerations -- Programs		
A. World Class Benchmark Programs	Through coordination of college peer participation and review, build, market, and deliver a number of brand-enhancing programs.	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Assistant Vice Chancellor; Presidents; Deans; VCCS Distance Learning Committee
B. Assessment and Quality Control	Determine possible models for assessment and quality control of e-learning; adopt standards	Assistant Vice Chancellor; VCCS Distance Learning Committee
VII. Policy Considerations		
A. Americans with Disabilities Act	Determine what action are required to make e-learning ADA compliant	Assistant Vice Chancellor; IT Staff; Representatives of Disabilities Office
B. Intellectual Property and Non-Competition	Define/refine IP, copyright and competition policies for e-learning	Vice Chancellor Academic Services; Legal Staff; Assistant Vice Chancellor; VCCS Distance Learning Committee
C. Other Legal Issues	Review legal issues likely to impact e-learning (e.g., advertising, vendor partnerships, the ability to license learning objects, etc.)	Legal Staff; Assistant Vice Chancellor; VCCS Distance Learning Committee
VIII. Process Considerations		
A. Communications Plan	Develop a strategy for communicating implementation issues and solutions among the Distance Service Learning Center, the colleges, and System leadership	Assistant Vice Chancellor
B. Sharing and Information Exchange	Develop mechanisms to promote sharing of ideas and best practices	Assistant Vice Chancellor; VCCS Distance Learning Committee
C. Ongoing Feedback and Quality Control	Develop assessment procedures	Assistant Vice Chancellor; TLT Center; VCCS Distance Learning Committee

Implementation Considerations - Leadership is Key

VCCS leadership must give six of these issues their highest priority as they implement the VCCS governance model and to move towards the distance learning vision. These are:

	1) Develop an Implementation Strategy (I.A.)		4) Develop Alternative Cost/Revenue Scenarios (II.A.)
	2) Determine Program Development Priorities (I.C.)		5) Establish Technology Services & Standards (III.A.)
	3) Embrace a Financial Plan (I.B.)		6) Define the Necessary Learning Support Services (IV.A.)

Realization of the VCCS vision for distance learning will come about only through strong and effective leadership. This leadership begins at the level of the Chancellor but goes far beyond, including vice chancellors, college presidents, and those faculty members most committed to expanding the role of VCCS in distance learning. Leadership will require the commitment of resources and time to ensure that distance learning meets the needs of the Commonwealth.

APPENDICES

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Appendix C: Schedule of Task Force Meetings

Task Force Meetings*	Date	Time
Task Force #1	February 27, 2001	9:00 AM - Noon
Task Force #2	March 22, 2001	1:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Task Force #3	April 19, 2001	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Task Force #4	May 24, 2001	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Task Force #5	June 26, 2001 (tentative)	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

* In addition to these meetings, Task Force members participated in several conference calls and, on numerous occasions, participated in the development of the plan via Internet exchanges.

Appendix D: Glossary of Terms

Asynchronous
Communication characterized by time-independence, i.e., the sender and receiver do not communicate at the same time (e.g., e-mail).

Brand
A product or entity that has a reputation and a loyal following.

Content development
The development of material associated with a course. The format of content may include text, audio, video, or multimedia. The types of content may include readings, exercises, simulations, self-tests, etc.

Course
A compilation of learning material, exercises, interaction, and assessments that enable the learner to attain stated learning objectives associated with a particular field of study.

Course Management System (CMS)
Course management systems are software solutions that provide an integrated environment for course development and delivery. CMS's are often designed for ease-of-use for faculty who are developing material as well as for students who interact with the finished courses.

Delivery modes
Options for delivering instruction (e.g., lecture, text, video, Internet).

Distance learning
An instructional delivery system that connects learners, regardless of their location, with educational resources. Because distance learning normally occurs in a different place from teaching, it requires special techniques of course design, instructional design, and communication. Distance learning uses technology to make possible new approaches to the teaching/learning process, rather than simply the addition of technology to instruction.

E-Learning
A subset of distance learning that utilizes the Internet as the primary delivery tool.

Faculty support services
Services, ranging from technical support to training, that support faculty distance learning efforts.

Faculty resources
Resources that help faculty convert course content to a distance learning format.

Appendix D: Glossary of Terms (con't)

Governance
How an organization is managed, what the reporting structure looks like, and who has authority over what people and processes. The purpose of governance is to ensure the common good. [Alternative: An organization's decision-making structure and processes.]

Learner management systems
Integrated software products that track learner progress, beginning with an inventory of learning preferences and career goals and tracking progress both within and among courses.

Learning object
Discrete modules of instructional material, (e.g., a video clip, an audio segment, or a simulation). Learning objects may provide information or interaction. Multiple learning objects are assembled to create a course. Learning objects may also be used to enrich classroom learning experiences.

Marketing

The act or process of selling or purchasing in a market; the process or technique of promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service; an aggregate of functions involved in moving goods from producer to consumer.

Needs assessment
The process of determining needs of learners, often based on surveys, demographic information, and labor statistics.

Online Learning
A learning environment that uses the Internet as the delivery vehicle, (synonymous with e-learning).

Organizational structure
Outlines and defines the roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of an organization. Interaction between different divisions/departments/colleges may be defined, as well.

Portal
Single point of entry on the Internet that brings together personalized and customized information from various content providers and resources for an individual user. A portal contains links to pertinent information and operates by bringing information to the user rather than requiring the user to link to multiple sites (URLs).

Program planning
The process of determining which programs to offer (e.g., criminal justice; electronics) and how to source the human, technical, and financial resources needed.

Programs
A compilation of courses that, together, constitute a programmatic area. Successful completion of a program typically leads to a degree or certificate

Appendix D: Glossary of Terms (con't)

Quality assurance

A process for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met.

Service center
An entity that provides various types of support to individuals or organizations.

Single face to the market
One common look and feel to a product or service, ensuring that users feel a strong sense of recognition and familiarity.

Strategic alliance
A relationship between organizations (e.g., college and vendor) that brings unique value to both parties and requires mutual investment by both parties. Strategic alliances allow organizations to create unique capabilities that are otherwise unavailable.

Student support services
The services associated with student enrollment, matriculation, and graduation. Services include registration, advising, career counseling, financial aid, etc.

Synchronous
Communication occurring between parties at the same time (temporally synchronized), although not necessarily in the same place. [Although the communication occurs at the same time, the parties may not be in the same place.]

Technical infrastructure
The hardware, software, and other devises that support [The technology (hardware, software, etc.) that supports] the use of technology, whether for distance learning or conducting the business of the institution.

Technical service vendors
Commercial entities that provide specific technical products, services, or expertise that bring value to another organization.

Technical standards
A set of standards that define the accepted type of technology or capability. Standards may be based on a specific product or on functionality (e.g., be capable of running Netscape 5.0).

Value chain of higher education
An inter-related set of functions that represent a spectrum of activities that occur within the organization.

Appendix E: List of Recent VCCS Distance Learning Reports

Report Title	Committee	Date
VCCS Distance Learning Program Delivery Committee Report and Recommendations	Distance Learning Program Delivery Committee	February 1, 2001
Quality Assurance for Asynchronous Distance Learning in the VCCS		September 2000
Distance Learning Action Plan 2000	Distance Learning and Instructional Technology Committee	February 1, 2000
Planning for Effective Integration of Technology for Classroom and for Distance Learning in the VCCS	LR & IT Committee	April 5, 1999
VDEN Compressed Video Administrative Plan	LR & IT Committee	June 1997
Distance Learning Management Model Implementation Committee - Final Report	Implementation Committee	May 28, 1997
Report of the VCCS Distance Learning Study Group	Advisory Council of Presidents	February 1, 1996

Appendix F: Interview Guide

QUESTIONS

- How would you characterize the relationship among the 23 colleges that make up the Virginia Community College System as it pertains to distance learning? What is strongest about that relationship? Weakest?

- How wide is the buy-in for the distance learning vision for VCCS?

- What elements of the Virginia Community College System are most critical to retain in creating a governance structure for distance learning? What changes in the governance structure will be required? What things would be unacceptable in a VCCS governance structure (e.g., for-profit organization; creation of a 24th college)?

- How would you rate VCCS on speed, responsiveness, and nimbleness in making decisions?

- What criteria should VCCS apply to measure the success of its distance learning activities?

- What aspects of distance learning at VCCS (e.g., policies, technology infrastructure, faculty commitment, student services) are currently working especially well? Which need the most improvement? Explain.

- What else should we know about the VCCS distance learning environment, organization, and services that we have not already covered?

Appendix F: Interview Guide (con't)

Faculty and Academic Affairs

What is the state of "readiness" within the Virginia Community College System for each of the distance learning-related functions listed below? Use the following scale: Not Ready—1; Somewhat Ready—2; Ready—3; Very Ready—4; Don't Know—0.

Distance Learning-Related Function

Description	Readiness				
	NR 1	SR 2	R 3	VR 4	DK 0

Faculty workload	Policies guiding faculty workload for e-learning courses
Professional development	Training, education, experience and exposure for faculty to technology and pedagogy
Faculty mentoring	Guidance, support, encouragement, and direction for learners
Content design and development	Developing and designing e-learning course content
Course selection	Determining which programs/courses will be launched in an e-learning environment
Program planning	Developing programmatic priorities and criteria for course and faculty selection
Quality assurance	Overseeing and guaranteeing the integrity and standards for all programs and courses

For each function, which should be an institutional prerogative? A System responsibility? A shared responsibility?

Function	Responsibility		
	Institutional	System	Shared
Faculty workload			
Professional development			
Faculty mentoring			
Content design and development			
Course selection			
Program planning			
Quality assurance			

Appendix F: Interview Guide (con't)

Academic Support

What is the state of "readiness" with in the Virginia Community College System for each of the distance learning-related functions listed below? Use the following scale: Not Ready—1; Somewhat Ready—2; Ready—3; Very Ready—4; Don't Know—0.

Distance Learning-Related Function

Description				Readiness		
		NR 1	SR 2	R 3	VR 4	DK 0
Technical standards	Determining and implementing e-learning software standards					
Develop/maintain portals	Developing and maintaining electronic gateway, e.g., links to specific programs, libraries, campuses					
Licensing	Dealing with licensing of products, electronic resources, etc.					
Library resources	Ensuring that students have access to necessary library resources, including both print and electronic formats					
Content conversion/ tailoring	Responsibility for digitizing course content					

For each function, which should be an institutional prerogative? A System responsibility? A shared responsibility?

Function		Responsibility	
	Institutional	System	Shared
Technical/software standards			
Develop/maintain portals			
Licensing			
Library resources			
Content conversion/tailoring			

Appendix F: Interview Guide (con't)

Student Support Services

What is the state of "readiness" with in the Virginia Community College System for each of the distance learning-related functions listed below? Use the following scale: Not Ready—1; Somewhat Ready—2; Ready—3; Very Ready—4; Don't Know—0.

Distance Learning-Related Function

Description		Readiness				
		NR 1	SR 2	R 3	VR 4	DK 0
Admissions and credentialing	Admitting students into programs/institutions; certifying completion of program requirements					
Student aid	Administering student aid programs for distance learning students					
Advising	Providing student academic advising and counseling					
Registration	Overseeing registration of students and providing transcripts of course and program completion					
Billings and collections	Providing students with accurate billing statements, recording payments, and confirming registration					

For each function, which should be an institutional prerogative? A System responsibility? A shared responsibility?

Function		Responsibility	
	Institutional	System	Shared
Admissions and credentialing			
Student aid			
Advising			
Registration			
Billings and collections			

Appendix G: Results from Student Surveys

Virginia Community College Student Survey on Distance Learning

Summary results
March 18, 2001

Students in distance learning classes in the VCCS were asked to complete a web survey on their distance learning experiences.

They were asked the following questions:

- What did you like best?
- What did you like least?
- What would you change?
- Would you take another distance learning class?
- Why?

Questions were open ended. Student responses were categorized for purposes of analysis.

The information was collected over a period of 9 days.
There were 500 responses with 480 of containing answers to some or all of the questions.

Results of the student responses:

Liked best: (452 students responding)

Convenience	30.31%
Work at home	18.81%
Flexibility	24.34%
Work at own pace	19.25%
Availability	3.10%
Accessibility	2.65%
Communication	1.55%
Total	100.00%

Many students said this was the only way they could further their education. Many mentioned work schedules and family obligations as primary reasons for being in distance learning classes. High on the list was not having to spend time traveling to campus. Several mentioned that distance learning classes eased their problems with daycare.

Liked least: (337 students responding)

Lack of interaction	32.34%
Lack of timely feedback from instructor	10.09%

Appendix G: Results from Student Surveys

Lack of or confusing information	7.72%
Technical difficulties	12.46%
Rigor/pace of course	18.69%
Not what was expected	0.59%
Learned less	0.59%
Not able to test online	6.53%
Need for self discipline	6.53%
Discussion board or chat	1.78%

Students mentioned that they missed interaction with the instructor and/or students. Another frequent comment was that they wanted more immediate and more frequent feedback from their instructor.

Take another course:

Yes	96.04%
No	3.96%

Why: 402 responding (yes)

Convenience/Flexibility/Access	70.15%
Good learning experience	14.43%
Work at home/own pace	15.42%

Why not: 17 responding (no)

Want to be in class	41.18%
Course was disorganized/too hard/not a good learning experience	58.82%

Would change: 144 responding they would change something

More interaction with the instructor/more direction/ more timely response	16.66%
More discussion or chat/interaction with other students	11.81%
Improved web site navigation and information	11.11%
Improved internet access	0.69%
More reviews (reinforcement/preparation for exams)	1.39
More hands on/practice	2.08%
Eliminate discussion	5.56%
Provide online tutor	1.39
More encouragement/motivation from instructor	2.08%
Class meetings or set discussion times	8.33%
Extended campus hours for testing	2,78%
Calendar for class and/or specific instructions when assignments are due	6.94%
Lessen reading/rigor	9.03%
Better videos	2.78%
Online tests or proctored tests away from campus	4.86%
Post grades on web	2.08%
More flexible schedules for assignments	4.86%
Assignments returned with comment and/or explanations	2.08%
Better trained instructors (using technology)	3.47%

Students wanted more interaction and reaction from their instructor and more interaction with fellow students. They would like opportunities to attend occasional class meetings. Several mentioned their concern that their work was received. Most indicated they would still take another course because it was the only way they could participate in higher education.

Appendix G: Results from Faculty Surveys

Virginia Community College Faculty Survey on Distance Learning

Survey Results
April 16, 2001

Faculty of distance learning classes in the VCCS were asked the following question via web survey: "Please provide a narrative summary of any trends, concerns, and/or common threads that you have seen in student evaluations of your distance learning courses."

There were a total of 63 responses to the web survey. Five faculty members returned the survey with no comment. The responses were open ended in nature. A qualitative analysis of the responses follows.

The most common thread found in the faculty responses was the need for students to be highly communicative with their instructors and collaborative with their virtual classroom cohort. Faculty members frequently commented on the reasons students are drawn to take distance learning courses. Many students, according to faculty, are taking distance learning courses because of the flexibility and convenience these courses provide. This was the second most significant response by the surveyed instructors. Faculty respondents also addressed issues such as student completion rates, faculty course development demands, technology difficulties, and testing/grading issues.

Communication

Students want frequent communication with their instructors in a distance learning course. These results are in agreement with the findings of the student surveys compiled in March. According to faculty, students have an insatiable appetite for timely feedback from their instructors. In general, no matter how much feedback the students receive, they tend to want more. The type of feedback varies. Students are seeking clarification on grades, assignments, and general course information according to the instructors. "It seems that what the students still want is contact with the instructor. They want to hear it from you," wrote one faculty member. Another says, "In any course, student/instructor communication is important. With a web/video course, communication is a vital component for the success of the student. I have found that when a distance learning student is having difficulty in the course they tend to cut off communication with the instructor." Still another echoes, "The biggest problem in the courses is timely feedback and communication between instructor and student."

Students like to have one-to-one, personal communication with their instructors. Voice mail is a good alternative. However the most frequent form of communication is through e-mail. Another popular form of communication is the use of the Blackboard system.

The one-to-one level of communication offers many advantages over group communication in a traditional classroom. Several faculty members noted that they

Appendix G: Results from Faculty Surveys

learn more about their students in a distance learning class, over a traditional class, because of the one-to-one level of communication. One instructor said, "...the individual student communicates more candidly when only one person is gong to read or hear and respond to what is said or asked."

E-mail is the most popular form of communication in a distance learning class because of its ease of use; however, it does present some difficulties for the students. Many instructors have difficulty responding in a timely manner to upwards of 100 student e-mails per day. Instructors noted that many students do not have access to e-mail, which can complicate communication issues. However, e-mail provided by the college virtually eliminates that barrier. In order for e-mail as a mode of communication to be successful, students have to be diligent in checking the server for messages and instructors will need to answer e-mails received in a timely manner. One instructor noted, "The student's e-mail for the college is used, but students are not checking it. Often I will get an e-mail and try to respond, but the message is undeliverable. This has been a big problem for some students." On the positive side, students who do not have access to word processing software can copy their work into the body of an e-mail for submission to the instructor.

Students like to communicate collaboratively with their cohort. However, in the virtual classroom, that is difficult. One instructor noted that his students feel that there is not enough contact with other students and that there is a constant feeling of isolation. These findings are consistent with the findings of the Student Survey. On the positive side, Blackboard technology and the WebBoard are a nice substitute for students who seek collaboration with classmates. The Blackboard technology is highly regarded by students and instructors as a mode of communication.

Conversely, some students dislike collaborating with others because "it forces them to depend on other students' efforts and time constraints." One instructor sums it up very nicely, "Some of the students say they have a problem with self-scheduling and self discipline in distance courses; some miss the interaction with other students. Many say that classroom activities are time consuming and they'd rather work on their own; others miss the presences of fellow students. It really depends on the individual, not on the class since I teach five different ones on the Internet and get similar reactions about all five courses." Another instructor supports the theory that distance learning students are by nature independent self-starters who have difficulty accepting collaborative assignments.

The aforementioned findings of the Faculty Survey support the findings of the Student Survey. Approximately 43% of the students in the student survey least liked the inadequate level of interaction and timely feedback they received from instructors.

Convenience and Flexibility

Students who opt for distance learning classes over traditional classroom instruction are doing so because it offers them a convenient and flexibility way to take a community college course. "They are very appreciative of having the opportunity to earn credits and learn the material in a forum that meets their lifestyle demands and needs," wrote one instructor. This is especially true for students in areas where it can be difficult to get to campus (e.g.: traffic conditions in Northern Virginia).

Appendix G: Results from Faculty Surveys

Students value the freedom and flexibility of the distance learning class particularly as it pertains to how and when they complete their assignments. "Students taking on-line classes enjoy the independent pace at which they may complete the work," wrote one faculty member. Another wrote, "Many [students] admit that they are not "self-starters" and did not do well for this reason."

These findings of the Faculty Survey support the findings of the Student Survey as it pertains to the convenience and flexibility of distance learning courses. In the Student Survey, approximately 55% of the students mostly like the convenience and flexibility of distance learning classes, and 40% valued the ability to work at home and at their own pace.

Student Completion Rates

Many instructors are concerned at the rate at which students complete distance learning courses. The drop/fail rates for students in distance learning classes are high. Several instructors have commented that more students sign up for distance courses as opposed to students who successfully complete the course. Instructors are frustrated with the fact that there are far too many withdrawals. According to one instructor, "The continued concern is that there are far too many withdrawals from distance education courses."

There is a common thread in the instructors' comments regarding the misguided expectations of students who sign up for distance education courses. One faculty member is direct in saying, "As distance education becomes more popular, a greater number of students enrolling in the course have misguided thoughts that the distance education course will require less work than traditional courses." The self-motivation of the students is, to a large degree, related to how well they will do in distance education courses. While it may not be different than the traditional classroom, it is amplified in a distance learning setting. One professor sums it up very well, "In my observation, the only students that do well in distance learning are those that are inherently self motivated. The student that needs the social intercourse and pressure of the classroom, does not do well. The student that does not keep up is doomed to failure."

Many students cannot keep up because they are unfamiliar with the technology associated with the distance learning course. Instructors have noted that students who are unfamilier with the technology required for their distance course usually struggle, especially if the material is technical in nature. One instructor wrote, "...until technology becomes MUCH more user-friendly, we are doing students a disservice by letting them enroll in online courses without assessing their level of computer proficiency. Many students THINK they are proficient because they play computer games, send e-mail, and surf the web. But do they know how to attach files, save in compatible formats, find their way around a site, etc. Inability to use the available technology is one of the major reasons students fail or withdraw from the online courses I teach." Another concurs; "My belief is that distance education courses are NOT for everyone. Certain personality types and learning styles are more conducive to distance learning. I think students considering distance learning options should complete a survey or inventory to see if they are ready for distance education options and should be made aware of the responsibilities, discipline, and skill base needed for some courses."

Appendix G: Results from Faculty Surveys

One instructor suggests that in lieu of a computer proficiency test, or prerequisite technology course the early weeks of an on-line course should start with an emphasis on the correct way to use distance technology. As the course progresses, technology tutorials should decrease in emphasis and content workload should increase in emphasis. Several instructors have commented that students who are eager to learn the new technology will do so by the mid-term period. Those who do not keep up with assignments, because of the lack of technology intelligence or lack of motivation, tend to drop out at a higher rate.

Additional Observations

There are additional trends that warrant comment. Following are samples of the less frequent, but significant faculty comments:

VCCS Distance Education Model

- "It seems to me that too many distance learning courses are simply online "packages" rather than truly interactive courses --electronic correspondence courses, as it were. It seems to me that the VCCS must decide on its distance education "model" --whether a distance ed course is to be an independent study, online package or whether it is to replicate the best elements of the traditional classroom: discussion and collaborative learning (which it can actually do BETTER than the traditional classroom). Another problem has to do with the opportunities for cheating available to distance learning students. This is a tremendously difficult problem--how to minimize opportunities for cheating without eliminating the flexibility that is the chief raison d'etre for distance learning."

"More students sign up than finish--Is there an advising problem? How do we reach those students falling by the wayside? Since a lot of distance ed students also take traditional classes, where are the "real distance students"? Do we need 12 month faculty contracts so that distance students can enroll any time? How do we transform part time distance students into fulltime full program students? How do we assess distance courses as being equivalent to other courses? Does the VCCS leadership really know how much work goes into creating a distance version of a class? Does the VCCS leadership have a vision allowing VCCS distance ed to the equivalent of PBS in Virginia? Does distance ed add value or do successful distance ed students have the skills and knowledge at the beginning of the distance ed experience? Can we implement a non-degree non-credit distance ed that is the "training of choice" by business and industry in Virginia? Shouldn't we run non-credit non-degree distance ed like a business and for-credit degree distance ed like a university?"

"I believe that the future of distance learning lies in recognizing the importance of personal contact, and its corollary: maintaining the quality of service means limiting the number of students per instructor. In addition, I teach skill courses, which require a different kind of work from courses that teach ideas..."

Appendix G: Results from Faculty Surveys

Faculty Demands

- "The learning curve for faculty is steep and if there is not anyone available to hire for you to replace you while you create the course, the time demands are overwhelming."
- "Does the VCCS really know how much work goes into creating a distance version of a class?"

Technology Issues

- "The negative responses seem to do with technical problems or logistical problems getting online at first. I have to wonder if the obstacle is too great for some students and therefore they don't pursue starting or completing the course."
- "One concern I see from students is the inability to access the site at all times. We sell the courses on the fact that they can be completed on the student's time but they can not access the course when they really need to."

Summary

The results of the Faculty Survey, in general, corresponded with the results of the Student Survey. Generally, students take distance learning courses because it is convenient and fits into their flexible schedules. While taking the course, students are eager to seek out communications with their instructor but mixed as to their desire to collaborate with their cohort. Faculty respondents have suggested ways that they can increase student completion rates in distance education courses. Additional comments addressed suggestions for developing a distance learning model, the level of faculty demands, and general technology issues.

Overall, faculty respondents were candid in their comments and were eager to offer usable suggestions for the development of a strong VCCS distance learning strategic plan model.

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models

The table below lists the distinguishing goals of each of the alternative governance models

Option #	Model Name	Distinguishing Goal
1	VCCS Technical Service Model	To retain college autonomy for all distance learning development and delivery while leveraging technical resources across the System.
2	VCCS E-Learning Delivery Model	To promote development and delivery of e-learning courses and programs across all colleges, leveraging the breadth and size of the System.
3	VCCS Electronic Distance Learning Delivery Model	To develop and promote all modes of electronic distance learning delivery across all colleges.
4	Comprehensive VCCS Service Center Delivery Model	To provide a seamless interface of distance learning support services for students and faculty.

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: Option #1

Option #1:

VCCS Technical Support Model

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: What is the distinguishing goal of the VCCS technical support model?

The distinguishing goal: To retain college autonomy for all distance learning development and delivery while leveraging technical resources across the System. Underlying this goal is the assumption that the 23 colleges understand the distance learning needs of their constituents and are most qualified to make informed decisions about what courses and programs should be developed and delivered in a distance learning delivery mode and where resources should be targeted for distance learning. The role of VCCS is to facilitate development and application of technology standards and to provide limited technology support to the colleges.

COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES

ENROLL STUDENTS: Students enroll in the college of their choice

MAINTAIN ACADEMIC QUALITY: Colleges are responsible for maintaining the academic quality worthy of their own and the VCCS brand.

CONFER DEGREES: Students matriculate at the college and graduate with a degree from that college. The college, its departments, and faculty are responsible for conferring degrees only if the student meets the academic requirements established by the college.

STUDENT SERVICES: Each college is responsible for determining what student services should be provided for distance learners and how to provide them.

FACULTY WORKLOAD AND DEVELOPMENT: Each college is responsible for establishing workload policies and providing appropriate faculty incentives and training/professional development for distance learning.

PROVIDE MARKETING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS: Each college provides distance learning courses and programs based on the needs of their learners. Colleges go through traditional channels to gather data on these needs and market their offerings.

VCCS RESPONSIBILITES

PROVIDE THE DISTANCE LEARNING TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE: VCCS, working with the colleges, establishes technology standards and provides the colleges with funding and technical support in resolving technology issues that impact delivery of distance learning courses.

INTRODUCE TECHNOLOGY SERVICE VENDORS TO COLLEGES: VCCS is responsible for introducing technology service vendors to the VCCS community, with the potential for strategic partnerships. The colleges and VCCS assess potential return on investment and make an informed decision of whether to partner with the vendor individually, as a sub-set of colleges, or as a System.

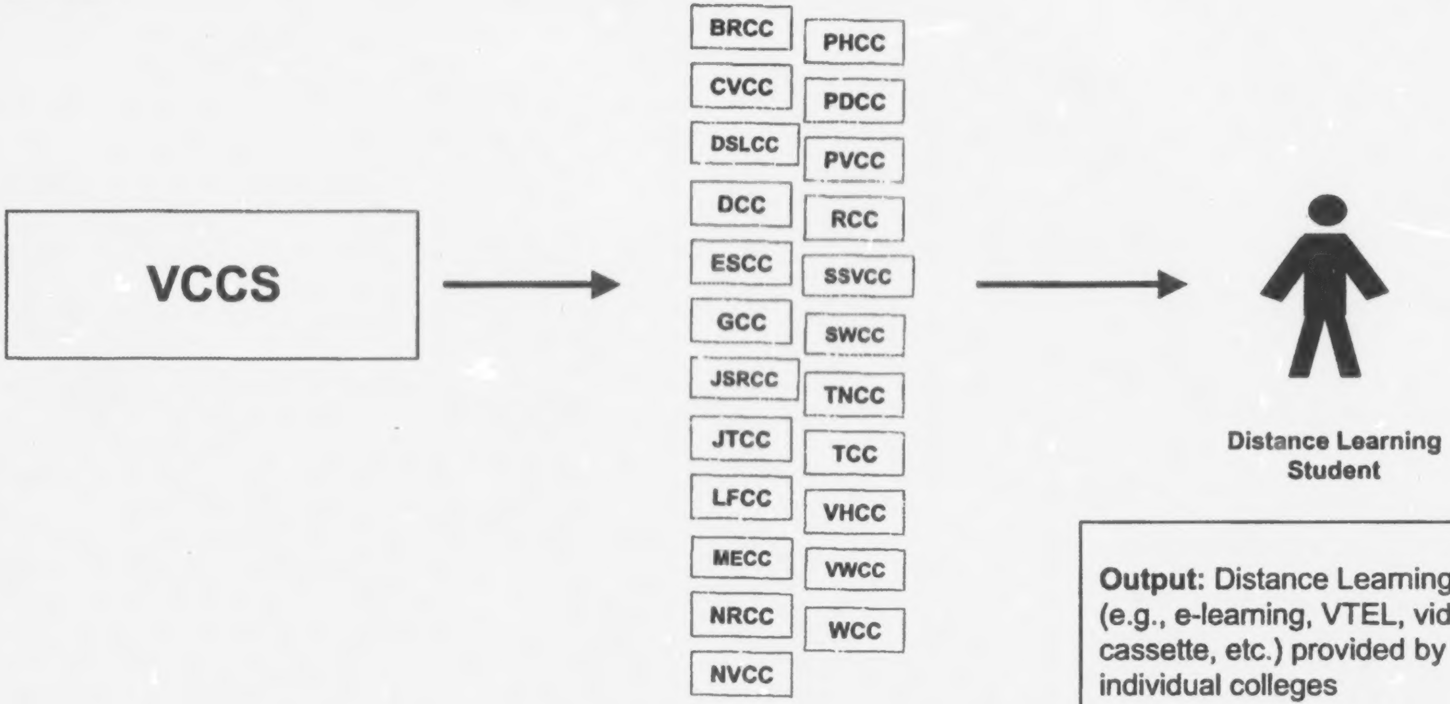
Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: How does the distance learning value chain function in the VCCS technical support model?

The VCCS System office supports the individual colleges through the application of technology standards

The Distance Learning Value Chain for the Virginia Community College System

	Curriculum Development	Content Development	Learner Acquisition & Support	Learning Delivery	Assessment & Advisement	Articulation	Credentialing
VCCS		• Content conversion services may be provided by vendors where applicable	• Inquiries are handled by the VCCS 24-7 call center	• Technical standards may be established through the System office			
VCCS Colleges	• Conduct ongoing market research • Based on results, determine market needs • Work together to provide expanded program and course offerings when needed	• Provide faculty development programs • Oversee course and program quality • Use content conversion assistance from VCCS when appropriate	• Make enrollment decisions • Conduct marketing	• Deliver courses with college-based faculty and adjuncts	• Conduct student assessment • Provide certain advising functions	• Negotiate articulation agreements	• Confer degrees and for-credit and non-credit certificates

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: What does the VCCS technical support model look like?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PDCC
PVCC
RCC
SSVCC
SWCC
TNCC
TCC
VHCC
VWCC
WCC
Distance Learning Student

Output: Distance Learning (e.g., e-learning, VTEL, video cassette, etc.) provided by individual colleges

Distinguishing Goal: To retain college autonomy for all distance learning development and delivery while leveraging technical resources across the System.

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: Option #2

Option #2:

VCCS E-Learning Delivery Model

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: What is the distinguishing goal of the VCCS e-learning delivery model?

The distinguishing goal: To promote development and delivery of e-learning courses and programs across all colleges, leveraging the breadth and size of the System. Underlying this goal is the assumption that the core competencies needed to deliver e-learning are distinct from those of traditional colleges and that the most effective means for developing and promoting delivery of e-learning courses and programs is by establishing a System-level structure. Concurrently, the 23 colleges individually and collaboratively are most qualified to make informed decisions about what courses and programs should be developed and delivered using other distance learning delivery modes.

COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES

ENROLL STUDENTS: While VCCS may streamline processes by allowing students to apply directly on the VCCS website, students actually apply to the college of their choice and that college is responsible for ensuring that only prospective students who meet the college requirements are enrolled.

MAINTAIN ACADEMIC QUALITY: Colleges are responsible for ensuring that online courses maintain the academic quality worthy of their college and the VCCS brand.

CONFER DEGREES: Students matriculate at the college of their choice and graduate with a degree from that college. The college, its departments, and faculty are responsible for conferring degrees only if the student has met the academic requirements established by the college.

COORDINATE CLICK AND MORTAR APPROACH: VCCS leverages the physical assets of the VCCS colleges, with coordination provided by the individual colleges.

RETAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHER DISTANCE LEARNING DELIVERY: Each college is responsible for determining what additional modes of distance learning delivery it should support and sustain.

VCCS RESPONSIBILITIES

LAUNCH AND MARKET E-LEARNING INITIATIVES: VCCS conducts market research for strategic decision-making, develops initiatives targeted at specific learner segments, assesses the success of online programs and courses, and adjusts offerings to market demands.

PROVIDE STUDENT SERVICES: VCCS is responsible for learner management, including, where necessary, coordinating student service interfaces with the colleges.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN THE ONLINE INFRASTRUCTURE: VCCS maintains the single point of entry for any VCCS online program or course, administers databases, provides faculty development, and sets policies and standards on the learning management platform.

AGGREGATE AND COORDINATE PROGRAM CONTENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES: VCCS contracts for content from various colleges according to adherence to VCCS technical and development standards, level of college interest, and availability of faculty resources.

ESTABLISH AND MANAGE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: VCCS is responsible for entering into formal strategic alliances with vendors to augment technical skills, content, and marketing capabilities.

DEVELOP POLICIES AND STANDARDS: VCCS, working with the colleges, develops policies to ensure quality and equitable faculty workload and intellectual property standards.

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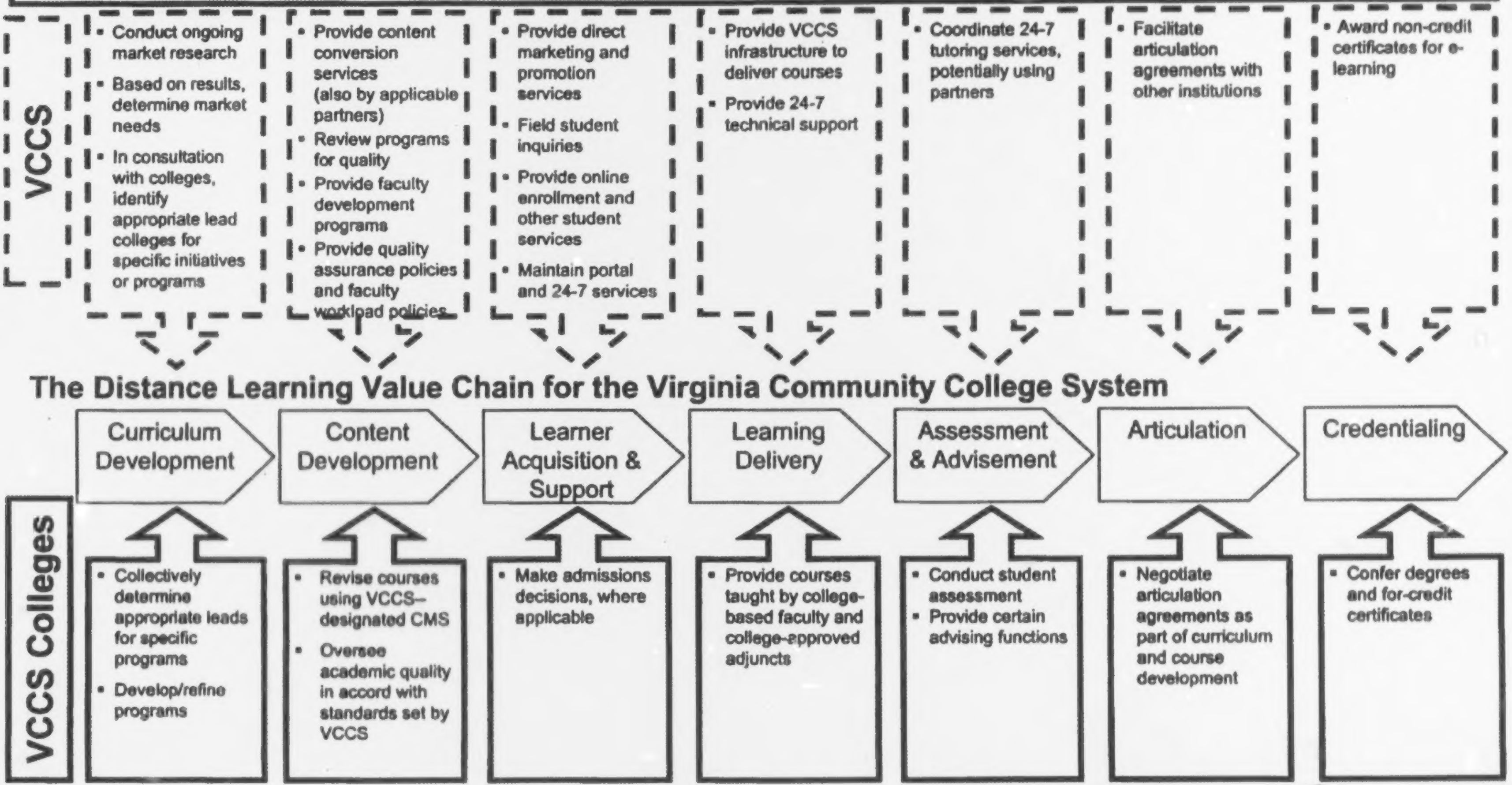
Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: How does the distance learning value chain function in the VCCS e-learning delivery model?

VCCS supports the 23 colleges in the development and delivery of Internet-based e-learning programs tailored to market demands.



The Distance Learning Value Chain for the Virginia Community College System

VCCS	- Conduct ongoing market research - Based on results, determine market needs - In consultation with colleges, identify appropriate lead colleges for specific initiatives or programs	- Provide content conversion services (also by applicable partners) - Review programs for quality - Provide faculty development programs - Provide quality assurance policies and faculty workload policies	- Provide direct marketing and promotion services - Field student inquiries - Provide online enrollment and other student services - Maintain portal and 24-7 services	- Provide VCCS infrastructure to deliver courses - Provide 24-7 technical support	- Coordinate 24-7 tutoring services, potentially using partners	- Facilitate articulation agreements with other institutions	- Award non-credit certificates for e-learning
	Curriculum Development	Content Development	Learner Acquisition & Support	Learning Delivery	Assessment & Advisement	Articulation	Credentialing
VCCS Colleges	- Collectively determine appropriate leads for specific programs - Develop/refine programs	- Revise courses using VCCS-designated CMS - Oversee academic quality in accord with standards set by VCCS	- Make admissions decisions, where applicable	- Provide courses taught by college-based faculty and college-approved adjuncts	- Conduct student assessment - Provide certain advising functions	- Negotiate articulation agreements as part of curriculum and course development	- Confer degrees and for-credit certificates

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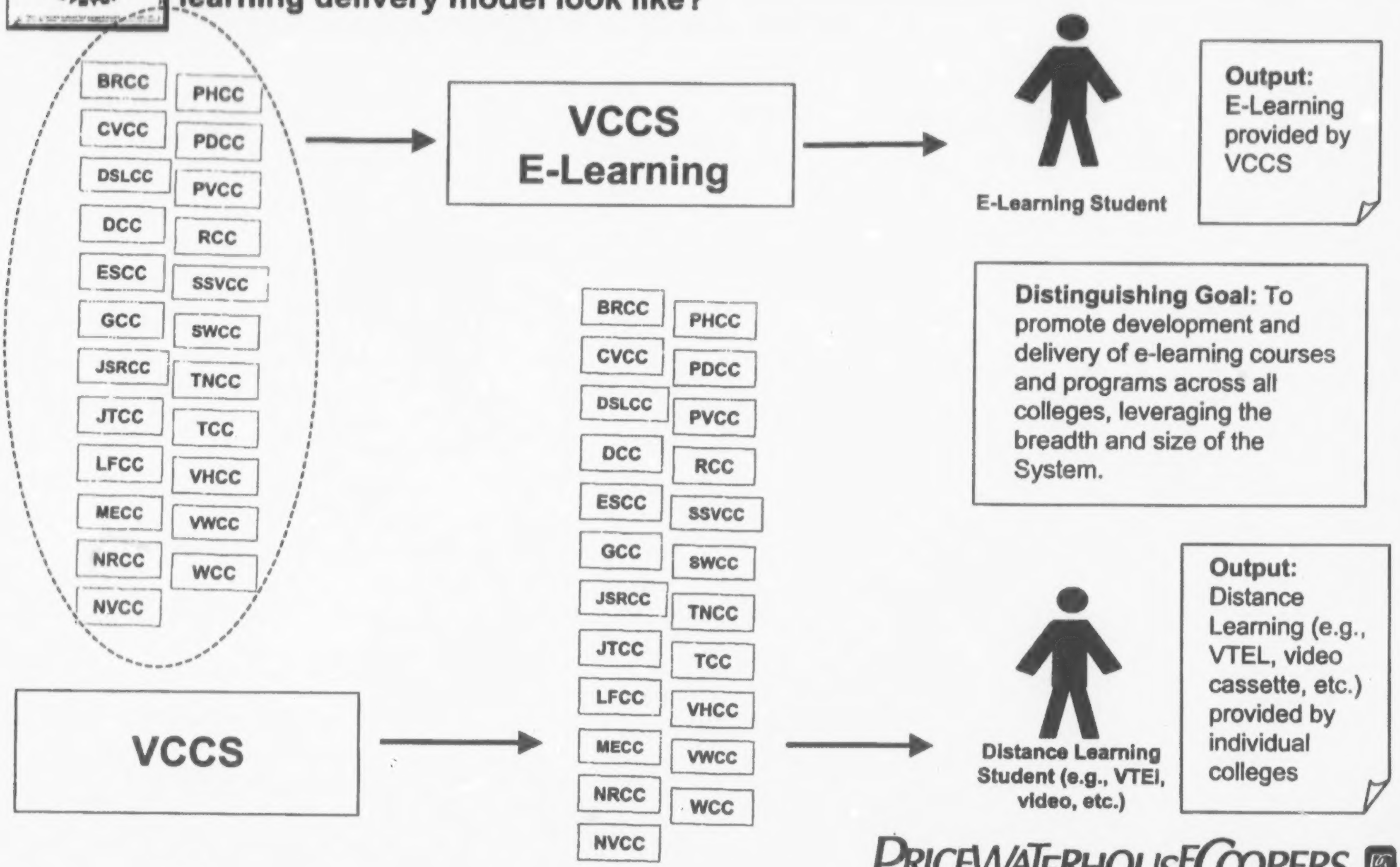
Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: What does the VCCS e-learning delivery model look like?



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TNCC
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VHCC
VWCC
WCC

VCCS
E-Learning

E-Learning Student

Output:
E-Learning provided by VCCS

Distinguishing Goal: To promote development and delivery of e-learning courses and programs across all colleges, leveraging the breadth and size of the System.

VCCS

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GCC
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JTCC
LFCC
MECC
NRCC
NVCC
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PDCC
PVCC
RCC
SSVCC
SWCC
TNCC
TCC
VHCC
VWCC
WCC

Distance Learning Student (e.g., VTEl, video, etc.)

Output:
Distance Learning (e.g., VTEL, video cassette, etc.) provided by individual colleges

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: Option #3

Option #3:

VCCS Electronic Distance Learning Delivery Model

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: What is the distinguishing goal of the VCCS electronic distance learning delivery model?

The distinguishing goal: Develop and promote all modes of electronic distance learning delivery across all colleges. Underlying this goal is the assumption that the core competencies needed to deliver comprehensive electronic distance learning are distinct from those of traditional colleges and that the most effective means for developing and promoting delivery of electronic distance learning courses and programs is by establishing a System-level structure. Electronic distance learning includes all kinds of distance learning except correspondence. Concurrently, the 23 colleges individually and collaboratively are most qualified to make informed decisions about what courses and programs should be developed and delivered using traditional print-based correspondence study.

COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES

ENROLL STUDENTS: While VCCS may streamline processes by allowing students to apply directly on the VCCS website, students actually apply to the college of their choice and that college is responsible for ensuring that only prospective students who meet the college requirements are enrolled.

MAINTAIN ACADEMIC QUALITY: Colleges are responsible for ensuring that online courses maintain the academic quality worthy of their own and the VCCS brand.

CONFER DEGREES: Students matriculate at the college of their choice and graduate with a degree from that college. The college, its departments, and faculty are responsible for conferring degrees only if the student meets the academic requirements established by the college.

COORDINATE CLICK AND MORTAR APPROACH: VCCS leverages the physical assets of the VCCS colleges, with coordination provided by the individual colleges.

RETAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR DELIVERY NON-ELECTRONIC CORRESPONSDENCE STUDY: Each college is responsible for determining what correspondence study delivery it should support and sustain.

VCCS RESPONSIBILITES

LAUNCH AND MARKET DISTANCE LEARNING INITIATIVES: VCCS conducts market research for strategic decision-making, develops initiatives targeted at specific learner segments, assesses the success of distance learning programs and courses, and adjusts offerings to market demands.

PROVIDE STUDENT SERVICES: VCCS is responsible for learner management, including, where necessary, coordinating student service interfaces with the colleges.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN THE DISTANCE LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE: VCCS maintains the single point of entry for any VCCS distance learning program or course, administers databases, provides faculty development, and sets policies on the learning management platform.

AGGREGATE AND COORDINATE PROGRAM CONTENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES: VCCS contracts for content from various colleges according to adherence to VCCS technical and development standards, level of college interest, and availability of faculty resources.

ESTABLISH AND MANAGE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: VCCS is responsible for entering into formal strategic alliances with vendors to augment technical skills, content, and marketing capabilities.

DEVELOP POLICIES AND STANDARDS: VCCS, working with the colleges, develops policies to ensure quality and equitable faculty workload and intellectual property standards.

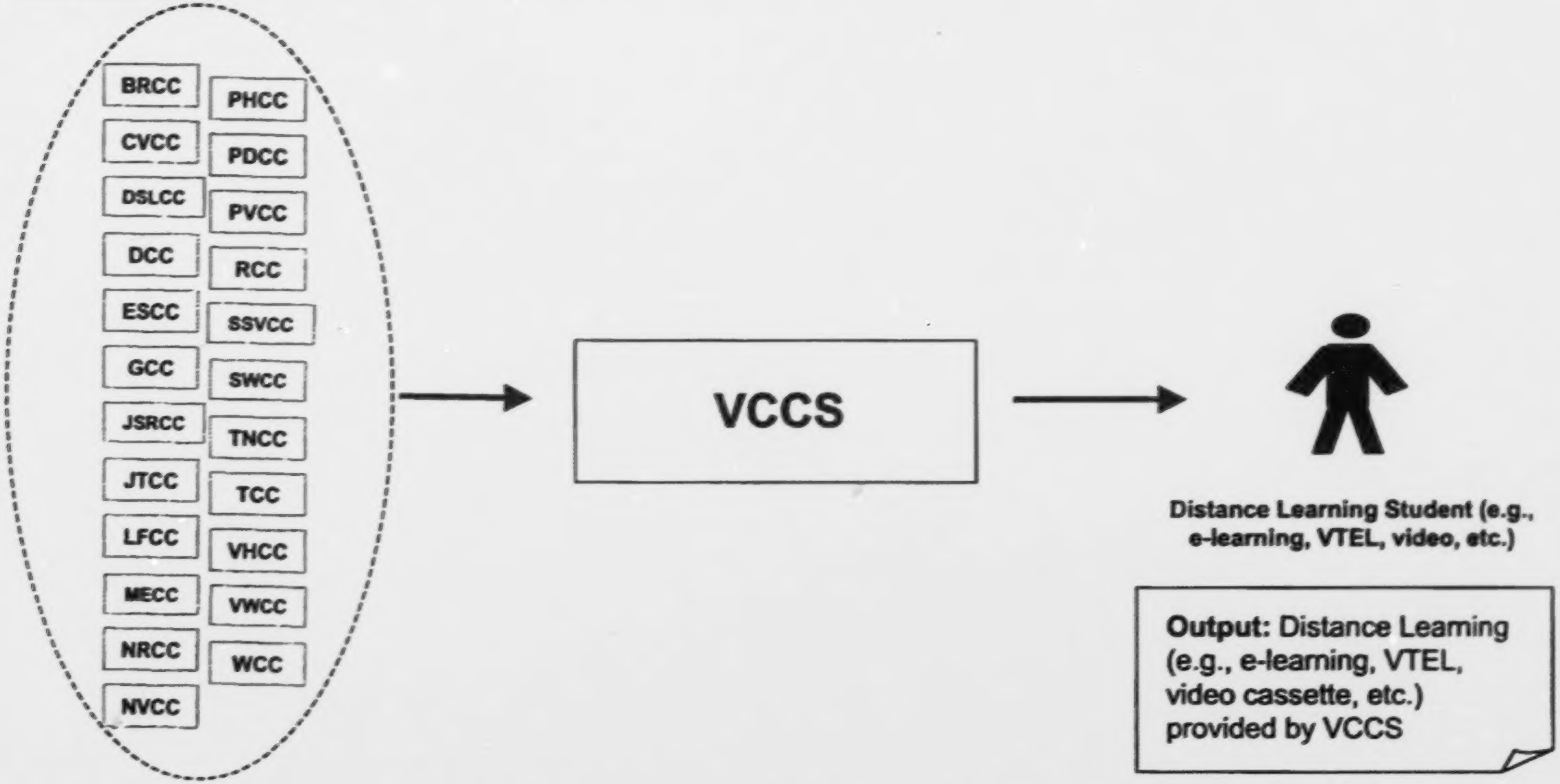
Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: How does the distance learning value chain function in the VCCS electronic distance learning delivery model?

VCCS will support the 23 colleges in the development and delivery of electronic distance learning programs tailored to market demands.

The Distance Learning Value Chain for the Virginia Community College System

	Curriculum Development	Content Development	Learner Acquisition & Support	Learning Delivery	Assessment & Advisement	Articulation	Credentialing
VCCS	• Conduct ongoing market research • Based on results, determine market needs • In consultation with colleges, identify appropriate lead colleges for specific initiatives or programs.	• Provide content conversion services (also by applicable partners) • Review programs for quality • Provide faculty development programs • Provide quality assurance policies and faculty workload policies	• Provide direct marketing and promotion services • Field students inquiries • Provide online enrollment and other student services • Maintain portal and 24-7 services	• Provide VCCS infrastructure to deliver courses • Provide 24-7 technical support	• Coordinate 24-7 tutoring services, potentially using partners	• Facilitate articulation agreements with other institutions	• Award non-credit certificates
VCCS Colleges	• Collectively determine appropriate leads for specific programs • Develop/refine programs	• Revise courses using VCCS–designated CMS • Oversee course and program quality aligned with standards set by VCCS	• Make admissions decisions where applicable	• Provide courses taught by college-based faculty and adjuncts	• Conduct student assessment • Provide certain advising functions	• Negotiate articulation agreements as part of curriculum and course development	• Confer degrees and for-credit certificates

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: What does the VCCS electronic distance learning delivery model look like?



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VWCC
WCC

VCCS

Distance Learning Student (e.g., e-learning, VTEL, video, etc.)

Output: Distance Learning (e.g., e-learning, VTEL, video cassette, etc.) provided by VCCS

Distinguishing Goal: To develop and promote all modes of electronic distance learning delivery across all colleges.

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: Option #4

Option #4:

Comprehensive VCCS Service Center Delivery Model

Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: What is the distinguishing goal of the comprehensive VCCS service center delivery model?

The distinguishing goal: To provide a seamless interface of distance learning support services for students and faculty. Underlying this goal is the assumption that the core competencies needed to deliver distance learning programs are within the purview of the colleges, but that economies of scale and more effective distance learning support services for both students and faculty can be realized by creating a VCCS service center to coordinate and/or deliver many of the support functions of distance learning. By creating a service center to coordinate and support may of the distance learning functions, this service center will provide a seamless integration of support services for both VCCS students and faculty.

COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES

ENROLL STUDENTS: While the VCCS Service Center may streamline processes by allowing students to apply directly on the VCCS website, students will actually be applying to any college offering a specific program or initiative and that college will be responsible for ensuring that only applicants that meet the college requirements are enrolled.

MAINTAIN ACADEMIC QUALITY: Colleges are responsible for ensuring that distance learning courses maintain the academic quality worthy of their own and the VCCS brand.

CONFER DEGREES: Students matriculate at any college offering a particular distance learning program and graduate with a degree from that college. The college, its departments and faculty are responsible for conferring degrees only if the student meets the academic requirements necessary.

COORDINATE CLICK AND MORTAR APPROACH: The VCCS Service Center leverages the physical assets of the VCCS colleges, with coordination provided by the individual colleges.

FACULTY WORKLOAD AND DEVELOPMENT: Each college is responsible for establishing workload policies and providing appropriate faculty incentives and training/professional development for distance learning delivery of instruction.

VCCS SERVICE CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

LAUNCH AND MARKET DISTANCE LEARNING INITIATIVES: The service center conducts market research for strategic decision-making, develops initiatives targeted at specific learner segments, assesses the success of a program or course, and adjust offerings as the market demands.

PROVIDE STUDENT SERVICES: VCCS is responsible for learner management, including, where necessary, coordinating student service interfaces with the colleges.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN THE DISTANCE LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE: The service center maintains the distance learning portal, administers databases, oversees faculty development, and sets policies on the learning management platform.

FACILITATE AND COORDINATE COLLEGE CONTENT AND SERVICES: The service center facilitates the aggregation of content from various colleges according to college strengths, level of department interest, and availability of faculty resources. Recommendations on which programs to develop and promote are based on these assessments. The service center works with faculty to convert the content to create a standard "look" across courses, and maximize the potential of the technology while maintaining the academic standards of the System.

PROPOSE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: The service center is responsible for proposing strategic alliances to augment technical skills, content, and marketing capabilities. The colleges retain the ability to make their own decisions about whether or not to partner with the technical and service providers.

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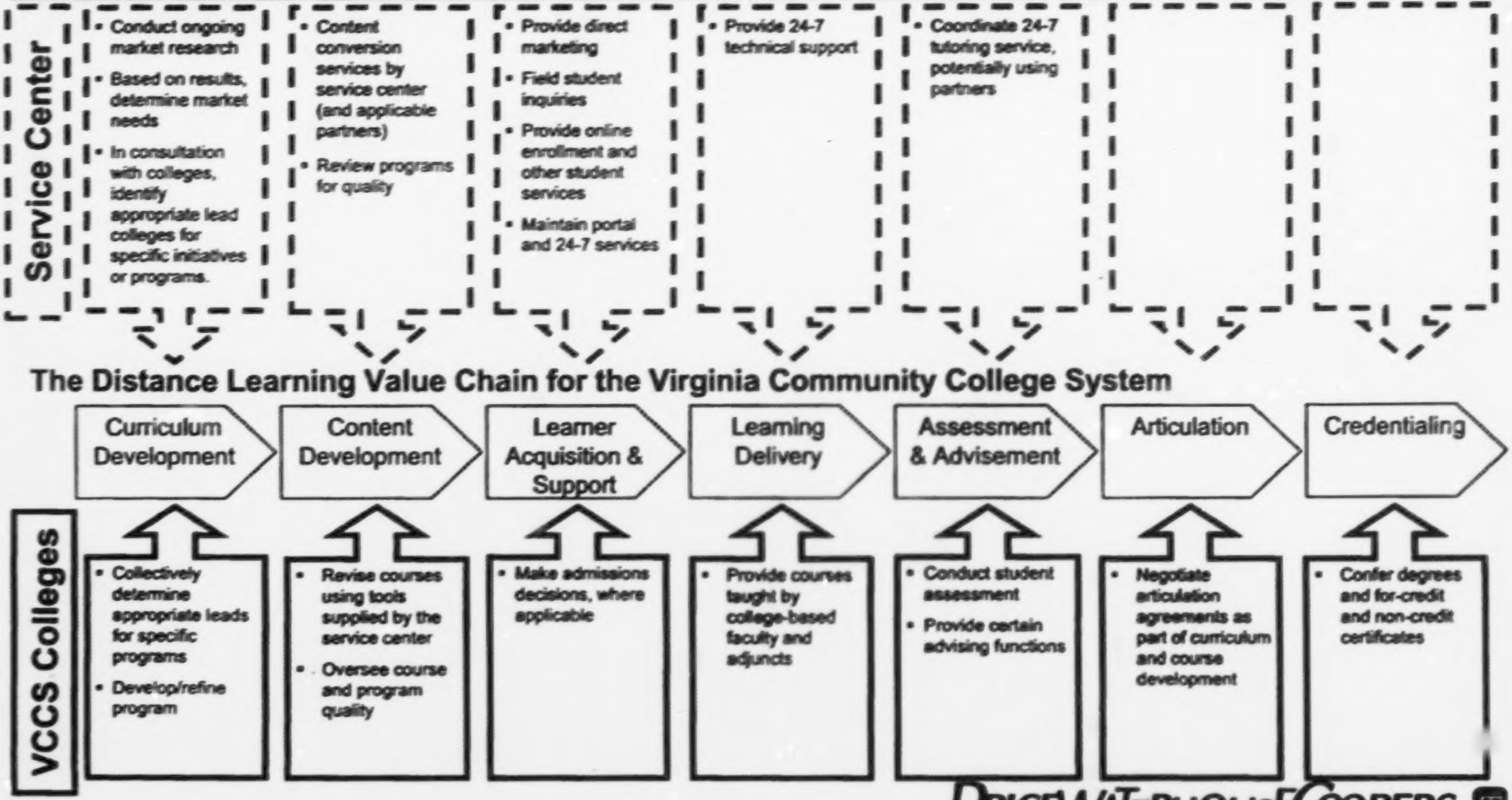
Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: How does the distance learning value chain function in the comprehensive VCCS service center delivery model?

The service center will support the VCCS colleges in the development and delivery of electronic distance learning programs tailored to market demands.



Service Center

- Conduct ongoing market research
- Based on results, determine market needs
- In consultation with colleges, identify appropriate lead colleges for specific initiatives or programs.

- Content conversion services by service center (and applicable partners)
- Review programs for quality

- Provide direct marketing
- Field student inquiries
- Provide online enrollment and other student services
- Maintain portal and 24-7 services

- Provide 24-7 technical support

- Coordinate 24-7 tutoring service, potentially using partners

The Distance Learning Value Chain for the Virginia Community College System

Curriculum Development → Content Development → Learner Acquisition & Support → Learning Delivery → Assessment & Advisement → Articulation → Credentialing

VCCS Colleges

- Collectively determine appropriate leads for specific programs
- Develop/refine program

- Revise courses using tools supplied by the service center
- Oversee course and program quality

- Make admissions decisions, where applicable

- Provide courses taught by college-based faculty and adjuncts

- Conduct student assessment
- Provide certain advising functions

- Negotiate articulation agreements as part of curriculum and course development

- Confer degrees and for-credit and non-credit certificates

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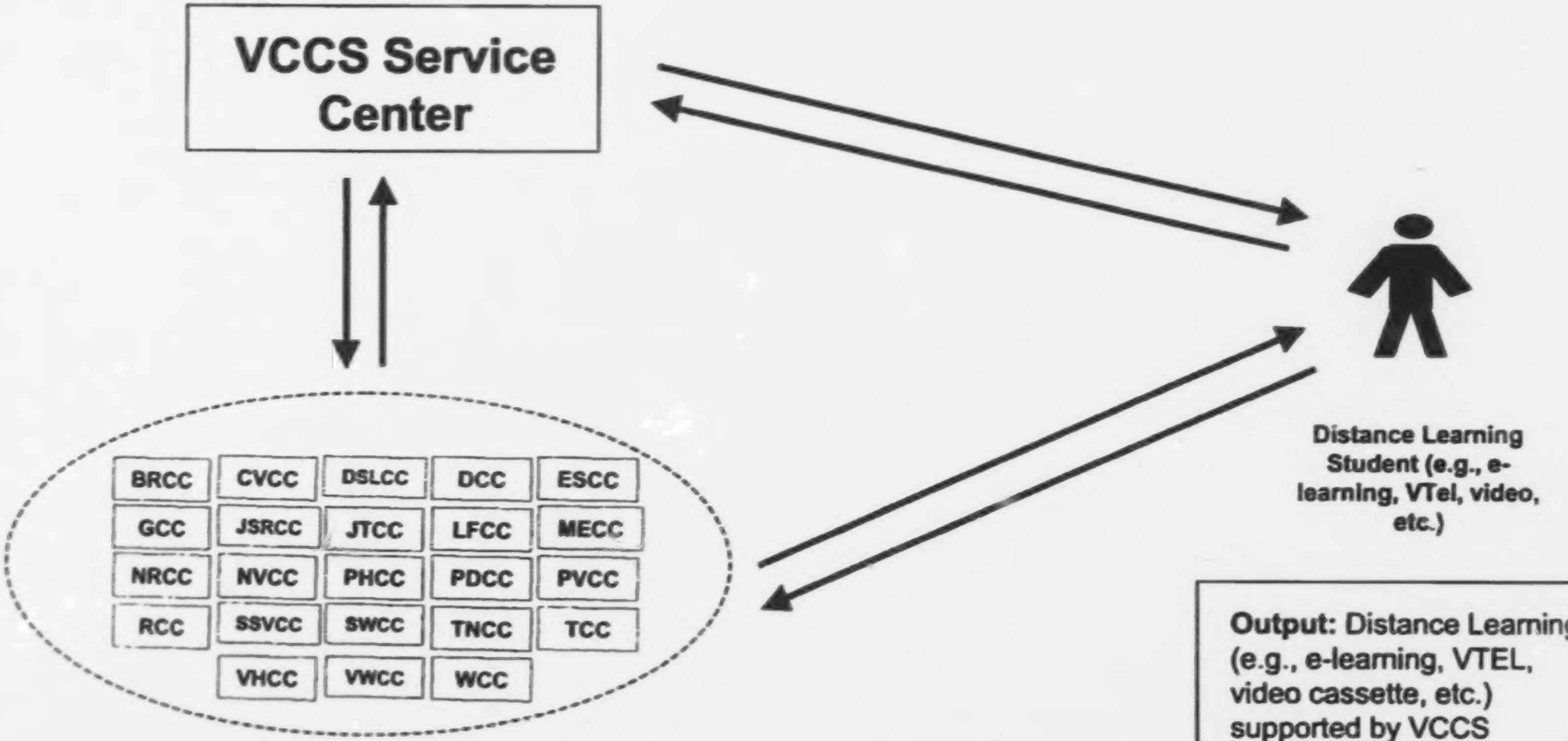
Appendix H: Four Alternative Governance Models: What does the comprehensive VCCS service center delivery model look like?



VCCS Service Center

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NRCC NVCC PHCC PDCC PVCC
RCC SSVCC SWCC TNCC TCC
VHCC VWCC WCC

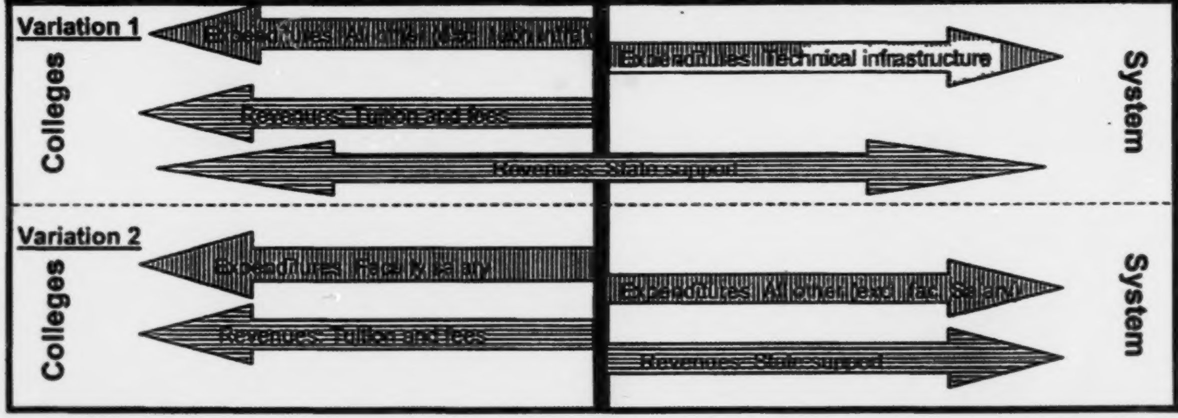
Distance Learning Student (e.g., e-learning, VTel, video, etc.)

Output: Distance Learning (e.g., e-learning, VTEL, video cassette, etc.) supported by VCCS

Distinguishing Goal: To provide a seamless interface of distance learning support services for students and faculty.

Appendix I: Four Alternative Funding Models

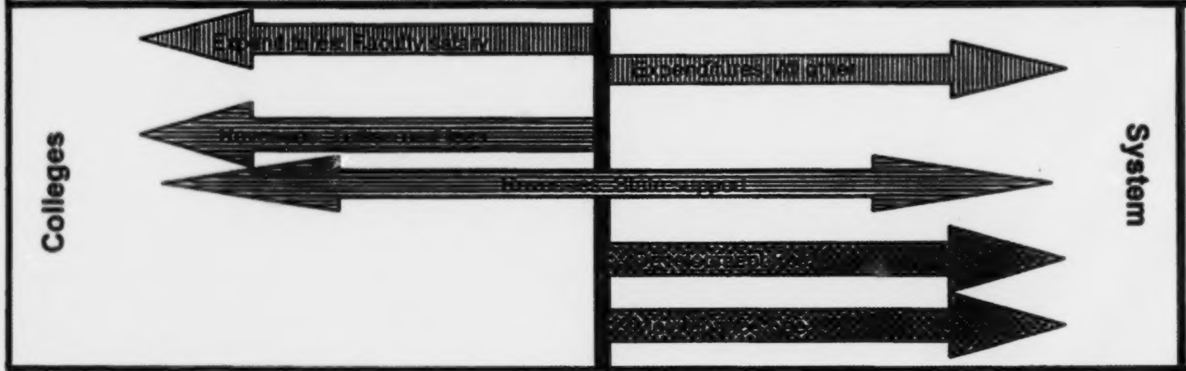
I. Off-the-Top Funding Model: This model, with two variations, allocates resources to the System prior to allocation of individual college budgets for the development and sustenance of distance learning priorities.


Variation 1
Colleges
Expenditures: All other (excl. tech infra)
Expenditures: Technical infrastructure
Revenues: Tuition and fees
Revenues: State support
System
Variation 2
Colleges
Expenditures: Faculty salary
Expenditures: All other (excl. fac. salary)
Revenues: Tuition and fees
Revenues: State support
System

Greatest Benefit: Establishes funding support for distance learning as a VCCS priority

Greatest Risk: Fails to acknowledge the funding already withdrawn from the colleges to support VCCS distance learning initiatives

II: Development Fee Funding Model: In this model, all colleges wanting to deliver a particular course or program provide an up-front fee to cover development costs. System costs are addressed through development and maintenance fee revenues.


Colleges
Expenditures: Faculty salary
Expenditures: All other
Revenues: State support
System

Greatest Benefit: Promotes college choice in the decision to support System-level distance learning support services

Greatest Risk: Risks colleges deciding to development their own courses and support structures and not use the Distance Learning Service Center

Note: The arrows are illustrative of the dollar flows, but carry no implication about the amount of money

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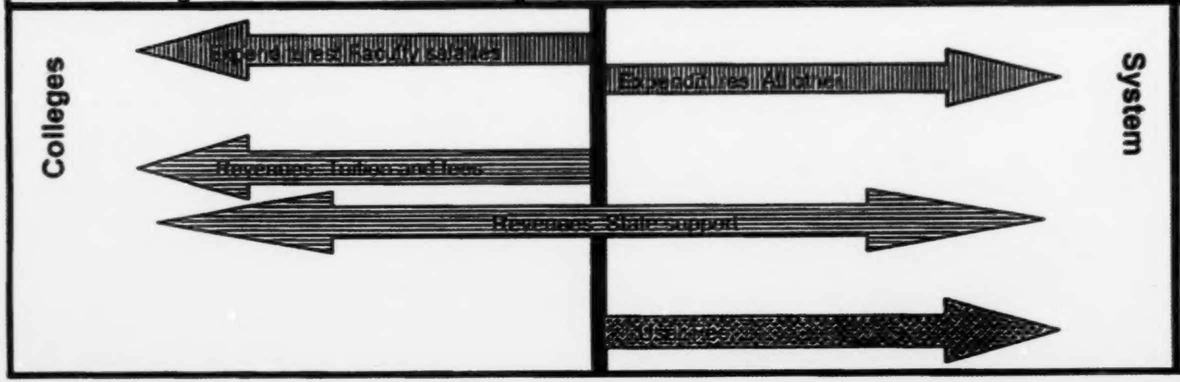
Appendix I: Four Alternative Funding Models (con't)

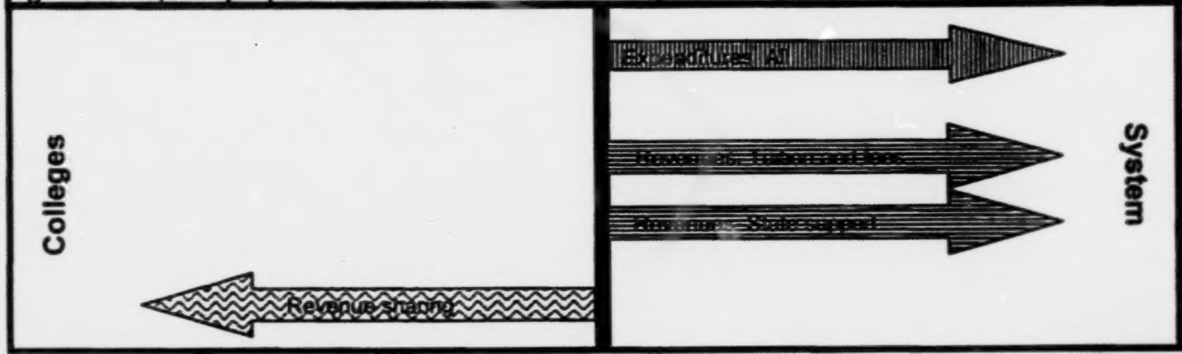
III. User Fee Funding Model: With the user fee, all colleges wanting to deliver a particular course or program pay a user fee per course delivered to the System to cover the cost of development and student and faculty support services. The System covers a large share of its costs through the user fee revenues.


Colleges
Expenditures: Faculty salaries
Expenditures: All other
Revenues: Tuition and fees
Revenues: State support
User fees
System

Greatest Benefit: Promotes college choice in the decision to support distance learning

Greatest Risk: Risks insufficient college interest in delivering the courses developed by the Distance Learning Service Center

IV. Revenue Sharing Funding Model: Under the fourth model, all initial revenues go to the System operations, with those colleges providing the course development and/or delivery of distance learning proportionately sharing in the revenue generated; this proportion increases after development costs have been recovered.


Colleges
Expenditures: All
Revenues: Tuition and fees
Revenues: State support
Revenue sharing
System

Greatest Benefit: Assures adequate funding to support the Distance Learning Service Center and overall program development

Greatest Risk: Creates ambiguity within the colleges regarding control over revenue generation

Note: The arrows are illustrative of the dollar flows, but carry no implication about the amount of money

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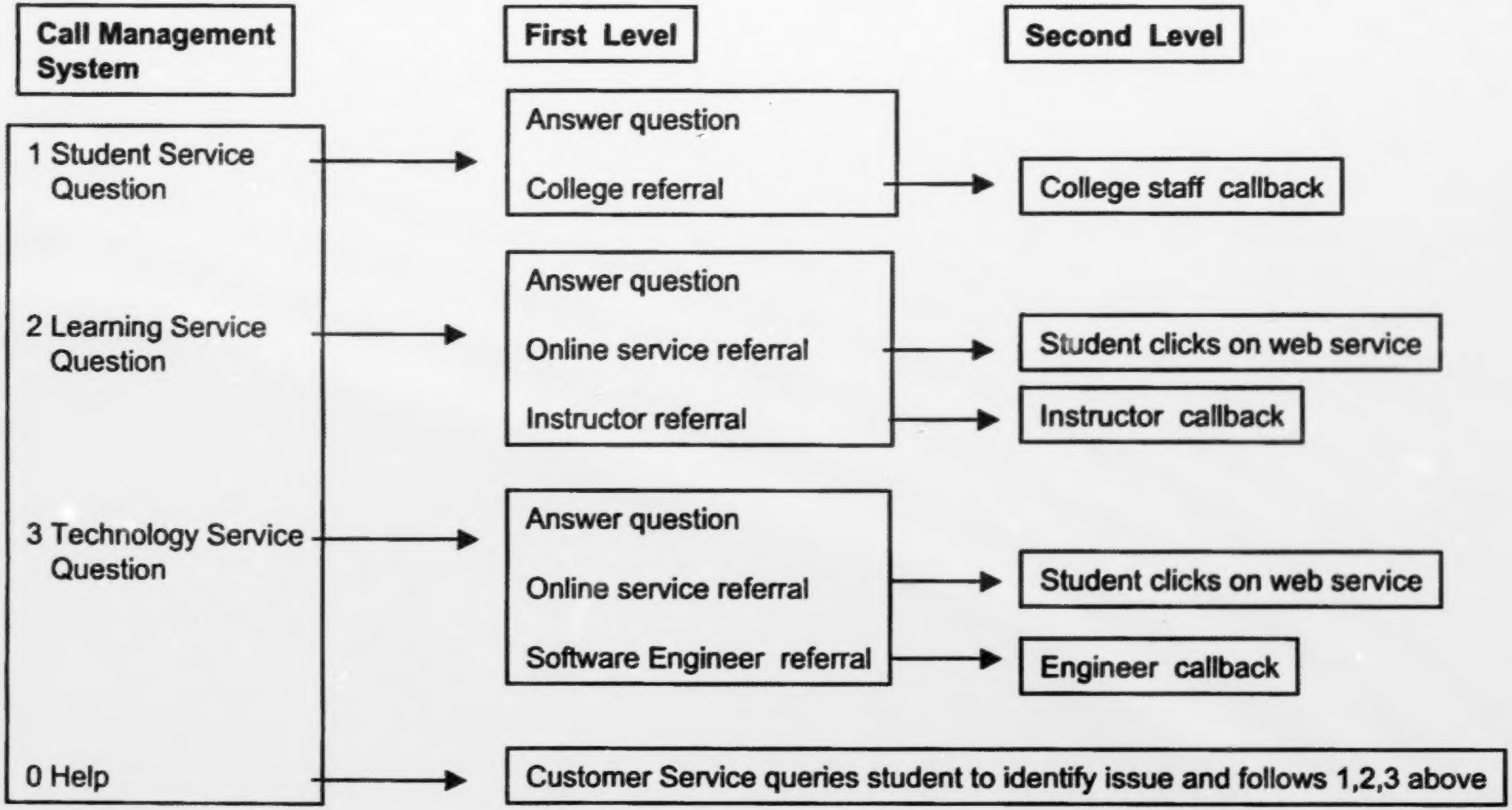
Appendix J: Learner Service Telephone Path Model



Call Management System

First Level

Second Level

1 Student Service Question → Answer question / College referral → College staff callback

2 Learning Service Question → Answer question / Online service referral → Student clicks on web service / Instructor referral → Instructor callback

3 Technology Service Question → Answer question / Online service referral → Student clicks on web service / Software Engineer referral → Engineer callback

0 Help → Customer Service queries student to identify issue and follows 1,2,3 above

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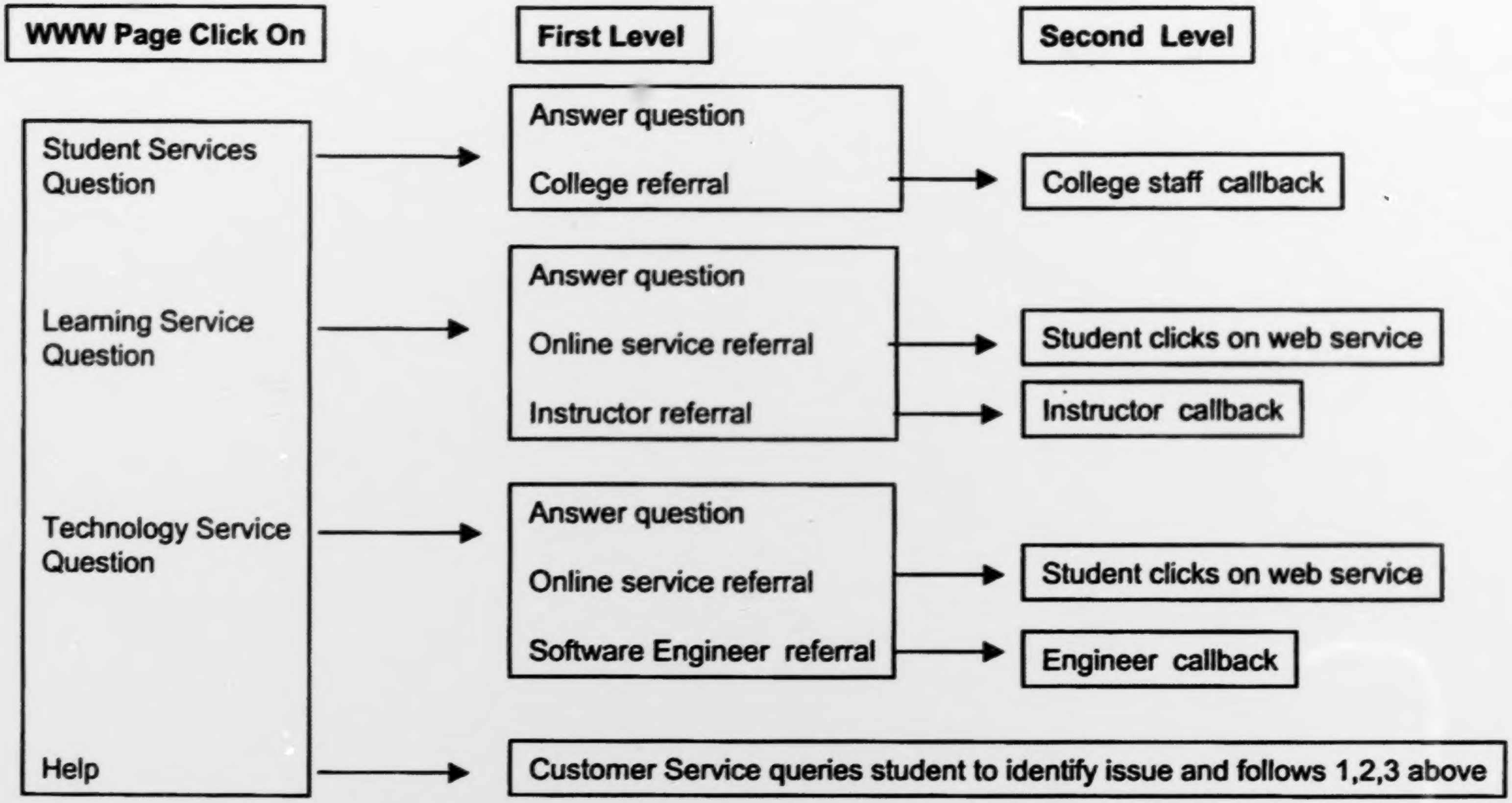
Appendix J: Learner Service--WWW Online Path Model



WWW Page Click On

First Level

Second Level

Student Services Question → Answer question; College referral → College staff callback

Learning Service Question → Answer question; Online service referral → Student clicks on web service; Instructor referral → Instructor callback

Technology Service Question → Answer question; Online service referral → Student clicks on web service; Software Engineer referral → Engineer callback

Help → Customer Service queries student to identify issue and follows 1,2,3 above

Appendix J: Learner Service Coverage Model

- Call Manager and WWW email services managed by the Utility Customer Service Center
    - Customer Service Center handles "help" queries to determine the nature of the question
    - Call Manager and WWW page email options can be directed if student knows the character of the question
    - Customer Service Center monitors the phone, email, and chat line for problems or needed assistance
    - All questions/issues logged in the help desk software for tracking purposes
        - Referrals are tracked and followed up with to insure closure with the student
        - Issues are tabulated and analyzed for service improvements purposes
    - Service Level Agreements will be drafted and published
- Technology services
    - Four hour blocks covering 16 by 7 initially
    - Coverage provided by current Utility staff and three new FTE needed to manage the help processes
    - Some coverage may be by contract with the colleges
    - No assumption that all services will come from Richmond

Appendix J: Learner Service Coverage Model (con't)

- First level assistance
    - First level expected to handle routing issues and questions (typically 60 –70% of inquiries
    - Inquiries logged in help desk software to provide list of Frequently Asked Questions and answers
    - Student services
        - SIS based information
        - Four hour blocks of coverage – initially 16 x 7
        - Three FTEs funded, allowing the service center to contract with colleges for staff coverage.
        - Provide answer or refer issue to college staff person identified in a college call list for call back within 24 hours
    - Learning services
        - Four hour blocks of coverage – initially 16 x 7
        - Three FTEs initially for three disciplines funded for contracting with colleges for staff coverage.
        - Provide answers or refer to online service or instructor for call back within 24 hours
- Second level assistance
    - All referrals from the first level assistance staff
    - All inquiries handled on a call back basis for second level
    - Call back may include telephone, email, or chat room contact

Appendix K: Service Center Expenditure Scenario

Expenditure Scenario: The following describes preliminary thinking on resource expenditures to support distance learning at the colleges through the Distance Learning Services Center. Final decisions about expenditures will depend on the resources available and will be guided by the VCCS Distance Learning Committee.

Hardware/Software Payments & Maintenance **$395,000**

Lease and maintenance of a course management system to provide a user-friendly delivery platform. Blackboard is currently being evaluated to determine if it can support the number of users expected to be engaged in distance learning or in courses having technology components. The system will be integrated with the student SIS system to provide seamless access to content and/or information.

Content Development **$1,400,000**

The focus will be on the acquisition and/or development of appropriate resources to configure courses. Content will be selected and/or developed based on instructional needs and availability of content. Development of components for courses (learning materials) will be done by a team comprised of the following configuration for each course: 5 discipline-based faculty (3 hours release time each for one semester), 20 hours per week instructional design support for one semester, 7 hours per week electronic resource specialist consultation/research, 13 hours per week web development support, 80 hours of technical support. Course maintenance will be supported as follows: 3 faculty at summer stipend rate for 3 hours, 12.5 hours per week instructional design support, 4 hours per week electronic resource specialist consultant/research, 40 hours technical support. The funding noted above will support 10 course development projects per year and 10 course maintenance/updates per year.

Course development will be based on course components (content building blocks) which will either be purchased, developed, or acquired through existing content repositories. This method will result in content that is modular, reusable, flexible, built for online delivery, meets quality standards, is ADA compliant, portable, easily updated or modified, and is scalable. Course components will incorporate best practices and will undergo continual assessment and review. This method will result in a content repository that will be available to everyone in the VCCS. Under this method, a degree (21 courses) would cost $1,624,140. If duplicated at 23 colleges (devoting the same level of resources to course development), the cost for the degrees would be $37,355,220.

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Appendix K: Service Center Expenditure Scenario (con't)

Student Services, Learning Services, Course Administration,
Professional Development and Training **$935,000**

A variety of services will be needed to support the faculty and students engaged in distance learning. As with content development, it is felt that these services can be provided through in-sourcing (purchase services from VCCS colleges) and out-sourcing. One component of these services is the Customer Support Center (Utility technology and support) which will be the "front door" to the services. Inquiries will either be answered or referred to the appropriate agency or resource. Student support services (admission, registration, financial aid, billing/payment) will be addressed by VCCS A&R experts whose time will be purchased (3 FTE to provide 16 hours of support per day) and/or online resources (SIS, FAQ's). These staff will be the recipients of the referrals from the Customer Support Center. Learning services will be provided by either faculty (purchased from the colleges) and/or online tutorial services. Initially, 9 FTE will be purchased from VCCS colleges to provide 16 hours per day support for 3 discipline areas. A course administrator will provide support for courses on the course management system and will act as liaison with the Utility staff and the colleges.

Utility technology & support **$325,000**

The VCCS Utility will provide the technical support for the course management system and related services. In addition, the Utility will maintain a customer support center to serve as the first point of contact for users seeking assistance with technical, academic and support services. Calls/inquiries will be resolved or referred to the appropriate agency or resource.